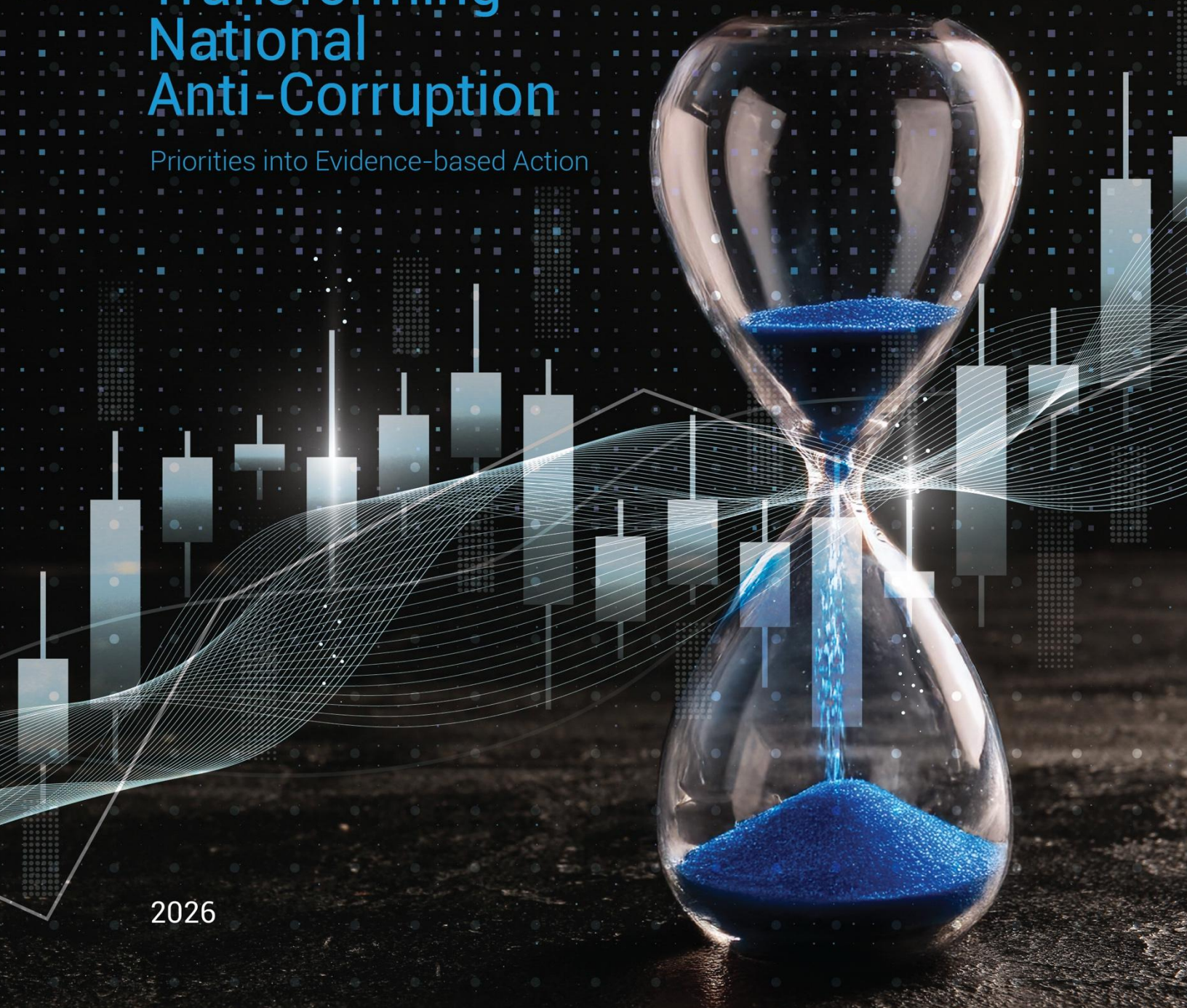
United Nations | DESA Statistics Division

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

PRACTICAL GUIDE TO MEASURE CORRUPTION

Transforming National Anti-Corruption

Priorities into Evidence-based Action



2026

PRACTICAL GUIDE TO MEASURING CORRUPTION:

TRANSFORMING NATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION

Priorities into evidence-based action

United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

With support from the Data for Now initiative

United Nations | DESA Statistics

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

DATA FOR NOW

© United Nations, 2026. All rights reserved.

This publication has not been formally edited.

Information on uniform resource locators and links to Internet sites contained in the present publication are provided for the convenience of the reader and are correct at the time of issue. The United Nations takes no responsibility for the continued accuracy of that information or for the content of any external website.

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

UNODC, Research and Trend Analysis Branch

Email: unodc-corruption.Framework@un.org

Website: www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/corruption.ht

Acknowledgements

This Guide was jointly developed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), with support from the Data for Now Initiative.

UNODC and UNSD wish to acknowledge Byron Villacis, PhD, as the lead author of this document.

The publication was prepared under the supervision of Angela Me, Chief of the UNODC Research and Trend Analysis Branch (RAB), and Faryal Ahmed, Coordinator of the Data for Now initiative. It also benefited from the valuable input of Maximiliano Marichal Abuiso (UNSD), Maurice Dunaiski (UNODC RAB), Salome Flores Sierra Franzoni (UNODC Information Center), and Stefanie Holling (UNODC Corruption and Financial Crime Branch).

The Guide was strengthened through practical collaboration with national counterparts in Colombia, particularly the Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE) and the Secretaría de Transparencia; in the Dominican Republic, particularly the Oficina Nacional de Estadística (ONE) and the Dirección General de Ética e Integridad Gubernamental (DIGEIG); and in Kenya, particularly the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC). Their engagement throughout the implementation process provided essential practical insights that helped shape the Guide.

UNODC and UNSD also wish to acknowledge the valuable collaboration and insights provided by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) of Mexico and the Controladoria-Geral da União (CGU) of Brazil. Their exchanges and reflections helped inform selected aspects of the Guide and enrich its practical relevance across different institutional contexts.

The Guide was also enriched by comments and suggestions received through the open consultation process. Representatives from the University of Trento; Ufuq Organization For Human Development; Transparency International Anticorruption Center; Studies and Economic Media Center; AWTAD Anti-Corruption Organization; Cameroon Anti-Corruption Youths Movement; Global Integrity Partnership; the Global Civil Society Coalition for the UNCAC, including its Working Group on Gender, Inclusion and Corruption; Just Access e.V.; the Wildlife Justice Commission; and Open Ownership contributed during this process. Their feedback helped strengthen the Guide's clarity, institutional applicability, and practical relevance.

The views reflected in this Guide are presented in support of countries seeking to strengthen the production and use of corruption-related statistics.

Abbreviations & acronyms

COSP	Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption
DANE	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (National Administrative Department of Statistics, Colombia)
DIGEIG	Dirección General de Ética e Integridad Gubernamental (General Directorate for Ethics and Government Integrity, Dominican Republic)
EACC	Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (Kenya)
GPSDD	Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data
GSBPM	Generic Statistical Business Process Model
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
NSO	National statistical office
ONE	Oficina Nacional de Estadística (National Statistical Office, Dominican Republic)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SESNA	Secretaría Ejecutiva del Sistema Nacional Anticorrupción (Mexico)
SNIEG	National System of Statistical and Geographical Information (Mexico)
ST	Secretaría de Transparencia (Transparency Secretariat, Colombia)
UNCAC	United Nations Convention against Corruption
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session against corruption
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS **3**

ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS **4**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY **7**

1. INTRODUCTION **9**

1.1 What is this practical Guide about, and what is it not? 9
1.2 Why should countries measure corruption? 10
1.3 What is the UNODC Statistical Framework to Measure Corruption and how is it related to this Guide? 10
1.4 How should this Guide be used? 11
1.5 Who can use this Guide? 12
1.6 How was this Guide developed? 12
1.7 What this Guide cannot do 13
1.8 Confidentiality, security, and responsible data use 14

2. STEPS TO PRODUCE CORRUPTION STATISTICS **15**

2.1 Step 1: Coordination 17
2.1.1 *Map key actors* *18*
2.1.2 *Establish or identify a task team* *19*
2.1.3 *Defining priorities in measuring corruption* *20*
Box 1. From national priorities to a first statistical agenda: examples from three country experiences *23*
2.1.4 *Define an implementation strategy* *23*
2.1.5 *Clarify data-sharing and legal arrangements* *24*
2.1.6 *Establish normative, ethical, and professional safeguards* *25*
2.1.7 *Strengthen collaboration with non-governmental stakeholders* *25*
Box 2. Non-governmental stakeholders as functional partners in corruption measurement *26*
2.2 Step 2: Data collection 28
2.2.1 *Administrative data sources* *29*
2.2.2 *Corruption Surveys* *33*
2.2.3 *Complementary sources* *34*
2.2.4 *Benefits and drawbacks of different data sources and indicators* *35*
2.3 Step 3: Data validation 36
Box 3. A good first-cycle source is not always the most complete source *38*
2.3.1 *Ensure completeness, internal consistency, and documentation* *38*
2.3.2 *Source readiness and validation outcomes* *39*
2.4 Step 4: Data Integration and Statistical Production 40
2.4.1 *What do data integration and production mean* *42*
2.4.2 *Why integration and production matter for corruption statistics* *43*
2.4.3 *Legal, organizational, semantic, and technical interoperability* *43*
2.4.4 *Identifiers, linkage, and limits to comparability* *44*
2.4.5 *Levels of integration and production: from simple coordination to systematic output* *45*
2.4.6 *Integration decisions, production agreements, and practical outcomes* *46*

2.4.7 *Data integration and production in fragile and lower-capacity settings* *47*
Box 4. Interoperability is more than a technical issue *48*
Box 5. A good integration and production strategy does not start with full linkage *48*
2.5 STEP 5: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION 49
2.5.1 *What analysis and interpretation mean in this Guide* *50*
2.5.2 *From indicators to statistically defensible questions* *51*
2.5.3 *Trends, comparisons, and the importance of reference points* *52*
2.5.4 *Denominators, rates, and what the indicator is actually saying* *52*
2.5.5 *Institutional and legal heterogeneity, practice, and comparability limits* *53*
2.5.6 *Attrition, bottlenecks, and institutional pathways* *53*
2.5.7 *Analysis in fragile and lower-capacity settings* *54*
2.5.8 *Interpretation outputs and analytic documentation* *54*
Box 6. Interpretation begins after validation *55*
Box 7. A useful interpretation is not always a broad interpretation *55*
2.6 STEP 6: DISSEMINATION 56
2.6.1 *Institutional leadership in dissemination* *57*
2.6.2 *Communicating sensitive indicators responsibly* *58*
2.6.3 *Dissemination formats and audiences* *58*
2.6.4 *Dissemination in fragile and lower-capacity settings* *58*
2.6.5 *Documentation, release protocols, and continuity* *59*
2.7 STEP 7: MONITORING AND SUSTAINABILITY 61
2.7.1 *What monitoring and sustainability mean in this Guide* *62*
2.7.2 *Why monitoring and sustainability are essential for institutionalization* *62*
Box 8. Monitoring and sustainability turn a cycle into a system *63*
2.7.3 *The evolving role of inter-institutional coordination* *63*
Box 9. Coordination should become institutionalized over time *64*
2.7.4 *Feedback between the anti-corruption body and the national statistical office* *64*
2.7.5 *Revising, adding, retiring, or improving indicators* *64*
2.7.6 *From a first subset to a broader monitoring architecture* *65*
2.7.7 *Monitoring in fragile and lower-capacity settings* *65*
2.7.8 *Monitoring outputs and institutional review routines* *66*

REFERENCES **67**

APPENDIX 1: Institutional mapping and coordination assessment tool **70**

APPENDIX 2: Priority-setting and first-cycle indicator selection worksheet **75**

APPENDIX 3: Data source scoping and selection worksheet **78**

APPENDIX 5: Statistical interpretation safeguard worksheet **84**

APPENDIX 6: Monitoring and sustainability review checklist **88**

Executive summary

Corruption is difficult to measure well. It takes different forms, affects societies in different ways, and cannot be captured through a single indicator or index. Countries that want to address corruption more effectively therefore need practical ways to organize evidence, assess the quality of available data, and build processes that can generate useful statistics without overstating what those statistics can show.

This Practical Guide ('the Guide') was prepared to help countries operationalize the UNODC Statistical Framework to Measure Corruption ('the Statistical Framework'), strengthen corruption-related statistics, and improve how those statistics can inform anti-corruption action. It was developed based on lessons learned from supporting countries that expressed interest in strengthening corruption statistics and improving how they are used for public policy. In that sense, the Statistical Framework and this Guide are best understood as complementary tools: the Statistical Framework provides the broader conceptual and statistical architecture and identifies what can be measured across a broad set of dimensions and indicators, while the Guide helps countries build the institutional, statistical, and coordination conditions needed to operationalize it. The Guide describes the practical steps to apply the Statistical Framework through coordination, prioritization, data collection, validation, integration and production, interpretation, dissemination, monitoring, and long-term sustainability. The Guide should therefore be read and used together with the Framework, not as a substitute for it.

The Guide has been shaped primarily by practical work carried out with national counterparts in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Kenya under the Data for Now initiative while also benefiting from exchanges and lessons from other settings, including Brazil and Mexico. This foundation is one of the Guide's strengths because it reflects the institutional and statistical challenges that arise when countries begin to organize corruption-related statistics in practice. Because the Guide is grounded in these implementation experiences, some of its emphases and limitations reflect the contexts in which it was developed. This Guide has also been enriched by feedback from institutions and experts from different regions of the world who reviewed earlier drafts and shared comments and suggestions as part of the open consultation. Their input helped strengthen the Guide's emphasis on professional independence, protection against undue political influence, transparency in methods, data confidentiality, data governance, gender and inclusion, access to justice as an anti-corruption enabler, and the need to keep interpretation useful but clearly bounded by the available evidence.

The Guide is primarily intended for national statistical offices, anti-corruption bodies, and other public institutions that produce, validate, interpret, or use corruption-related data. In most settings, the process benefits from a clear inter-institutional task team involving the national statistical office, the anti-corruption body, and other relevant institutions. The Guide is also relevant for civil society organizations, academic institutions, and other expert users. Their role matters not only because they can contribute knowledge and scrutiny, but also because, depending on the national context, they may generate complementary information that can help contextualize or complement official statistics when handled with the appropriate methodological safeguards.

The Guide is designed for gradual and practical use. Countries do not need to begin with a complete national measurement system or with all indicators at once. A more workable approach is to begin with a manageable first cycle: identify policy-relevant priorities, assess feasible data sources, select a limited number of indicators, organize the institutions that will produce and validate them regularly, and create the conditions for future expansion. The initially selected indicators should be understood as entry points within a broader national measurement agenda, not as a complete representation of a country's anti-corruption priorities or of the full scope of national anti-corruption work. With growing experience, the selection of indicators can be gradually expanded.

The Guide recognizes that countries operate under very different conditions. Even in very developed countries, very little data might be available or accessible. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, institutions may be fragmented, administrative systems weak, and some indicators are politically sensitive or difficult to produce safely. In such cases, countries may need an adaptive and modular approach that begins with narrower first cycles, stronger reliance on selected surveys or complementary sources, clearer do-no-harm safeguards, and more cautious sequencing. In other settings, countries may have stronger statistical systems, clearer legal frameworks, more stable administrative records, and more fluid coordination across institutions.

The Guide is also accompanied by practical tools designed to support implementation decisions at different stages, including institutional mapping, priority-setting, data source scoping, validation, interpretation safeguards, and sustainability review. These tools are intended to help countries move from broad anti-corruption concerns to feasible and documented statistical processes.

Ultimately, the purpose of this Guide is to help countries strengthen their own systems for producing and using corruption-related statistics aligned with their national priorities. Its value lies not in prescribing one path, but in helping countries build processes that are statistically credible, institutionally workable, responsive to national priorities, and sustainable over time. In the long run, the aim is for this process to create a feedback loop between evidence and policy, so that statistics help institutions prioritize, coordinate, assess reforms, improve data systems, and sustain more professional anti-corruption management.

1. Introduction

1.1 What is this practical Guide about, and what is it not?

This Guide is a practical tool for countries that want to improve how corruption and anti-corruption are measured through official statistics and related evidence. Its purpose is to help countries organize feasible national processes for identifying priorities, assessing data sources, coordinating institutions, producing selected indicators, and using them meaningfully in support of public decision-making. The Guide also responds to States' recognition of the importance of measuring corruption and the need for objective and context-sensitive methodologies, technical guidance and training materials for corruption measurement in resolutions 8/10, 10/4 and 11/5 adopted by the Conference of States Parties to UNCAC.

The Guide aims to complement the UNODC Statistical Framework to Measure Corruption. The Framework provides the broader statistical architecture and indicator menu, while this Guide serves a more operational purpose. It explains how countries can begin to work with that architecture in practice under legal, institutional, technical, financial and political constraints. We therefore encourage readers to use the two documents together: the Framework offers the conceptual and statistical foundation, and the Guide offers the practical pathway for operationalization.

The Guide was not developed as a tool to persuade countries to adopt a model from outside. It emerged in response to country demand for stronger corruption-related statistics and for technical support in that area.[1] [2] In that sense, the Guide and the Framework function as resources that countries may use to strengthen corruption measurement in general through their own statistical systems and policy processes, rather than as instruments imposed from outside.

Moreover, the Guide is not intended for rankings between countries or cross-country comparisons, but rather to support countries on their own journeys. It does not treat corruption as a phenomenon that can be reduced to a single number, and it does not claim that all countries can or should produce all indicators immediately. Instead, it promotes gradual, nationally owned processes that begin with a manageable set of priorities and expand over time as institutional capacity, data availability, and coordination improve, to support a more credible evidence base for understanding corruption risks, institutional responses, and the limits of what existing data can show.

At the same time, the Guide recognizes that the Framework will be approached by different institutions and stakeholders. Research on anti-corruption expertise has shown that the production and mobilization of anti-corruption knowledge are shaped by the institutional, professional, and methodological positions of the actors involved (Villacis, 2025). National statistical offices may focus on methods, comparability, and quality assurance. Anti-corruption bodies may focus on policy relevance and institutional coordination. Civil society and academic actors may focus on accountability, independent evidence, and implementation monitoring. The Guide functions as a bridge across these communities while keeping its core role clear: it is a practical support document for operationalizing parts of the Framework under real-world conditions. Even so, countries should recognize that quantitative measurement, however strong, will not capture the full complexity of corruption.

[1] Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. (2019). Resolution 8/10, Measurement of Corruption, eighth session.

[2] United Nations General Assembly. (2021). Political Declaration of the special session against corruption: Our common commitment to effectively addressing challenges and implementing measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation (A/RES/S-32/1).

Complementary qualitative approaches can therefore be useful, especially for understanding how corruption operates in the institutional, legal, and social context of each country.

1.2 Why should countries measure corruption?

Countries measure corruption because anti-corruption policies may be less impactful when they rely only on perceptions or fragmented administrative information. Corruption affects public institutions, service delivery, accountability systems, and people's trust in government, but it does so unevenly and often in ways that are not immediately visible. Better measurement helps make those patterns more legible.

A statistical approach matters because it allows countries to move beyond single-number narratives and work with a broader set of evidence. Data sources can include administrative records, survey data, institutional indicators, and other information relevant to preventing and combating corruption. Used appropriately, this kind of evidence can help countries identify priorities, monitor reforms, understand bottlenecks, and assess whether institutional efforts are generating observable change over time.

Not all indicators support the same kind of inference. Some indicators are better suited to descriptive monitoring. Others may help illuminate patterns or raise questions for further analysis. No single indicator, on its own, should be used to support broad causal claims. For that reason, the Guide favors an approach that is analytically useful but statistically restrained. Indicators should help inform policy questions, not be stretched beyond what the data can support.

Countries should not treat corruption measurement as a one-off exercise. Where feasible, indicators should be produced on a recurring basis, with the frequency determined by the nature of the indicator, the update cycle of the underlying data source, and national policy needs. Regular production allows countries to track change over time and, where the selected indicators and available evidence permit, assess progress in the implementation and effectiveness of anti-corruption measures.

Corruption measurement should also be attentive to gender, inclusion, and unequal exposure to harm. Some groups face higher reporting barriers, weaker access to institutions, or specific forms of corruption that standard sources do not capture well. In some areas, including sexual corruption, the absence of visible data does not mean the problem is absent. The Guide integrates gender and inclusion in an attentive way, both as cross-cutting concerns and in sections where these issues affect data production, interpretation, and disclosure risks.

Another challenge in measuring corruption is that access to justice is itself part of the measurement environment. Where people cannot report safely, seek remedies, or rely on functioning complaint and adjudication systems, the data available to measure corruption become more limited and potentially more distorted. In that sense, access to justice is not only a governance issue. It is also an anti-corruption enabler that shapes both the production and meaning of corruption statistics. To address challenges like this, the Statistical Framework contains indicators on the availability of remedial avenues such as reporting channels or access to information systems.

1.3 What is the UNODC Statistical Framework to Measure Corruption and how is it related to this Guide?

The UNODC Statistical Framework to Measure Corruption is the broader reference structure on which this Guide is based.[3] It provides a comprehensive set of dimensions and indicators that can help

[3] United Nations Economic and Social Council. (2023). Statistical Commission, fifty-fourth session: Report on the fifty-fourth session (E/2023/24-E/CN.3/2023/37), decision 54/120.

countries measure corruption and anti-corruption across different areas, including corruption and related offenses, preventive measures, and enabling conditions relevant to accountability and integrity.

The framework is constructed as a table with a total of 145 indicators. It covers direct measures, such as surveys, that can assess the prevalence of certain types of corruption, and indirect measures, meaning indicators that can assess perception, corruption risks, and state responses. The Framework's value lies in its breadth. It reflects the idea that corruption is multidimensional and cannot be captured through a single indicator or index. Instead, countries need a combination of measures and sources that can illuminate different aspects of corruption risks, institutional responses, and public integrity conditions. The Framework therefore offers a comprehensive menu that allows countries to choose indicators applicable and relevant for national use. In this context, it should be noted that it not realistic or envisaged for States to choose all indicators from the Framework; the indicators rather form a set of options that can be used in different combinations.

This Guide is designed to help countries work with the Statistical Framework in a practical way. In particular, it helps them decide where to begin, how to prioritize, how to assess what is feasible, how to strengthen the institutional conditions for data production, and how to use indicators with appropriate caution. The Framework and the Guide also share an important normative anchor: both depend on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.[4] This means that corruption-related statistics should be produced with professional independence, methodological transparency, impartiality, and appropriate safeguards for confidentiality and data quality. These issues are central because corruption data are especially vulnerable to politicization, reputational disputes, and misuse if they are not produced and handled carefully.

1.4 How should this Guide be used?

This Guide should be used as a practical support document throughout the process of developing or strengthening corruption-related statistics. It is not necessary to follow every step rigidly or implement all components at once. In practice, countries will move at different speeds, revisit earlier decisions, and adapt the sequence to their own institutional circumstances.

For countries at an early stage of corruption measurement, the Guide can help create a first cycle of work: identify a small number of policy-relevant priorities, assess available data sources, select a limited set of indicators, organize task teams, and clarify how the resulting information will be validated and used. In most settings, this process should be supported by a clear inter-institutional task team responsible for organizing and following up on implementation. Depending on the country context, this may take the form of an existing coordination mechanism, a small working team, an inter-agency task force, or another appropriate institutional arrangement.

The Guide can also be used by different actors for different purposes. A national statistical office may use it to structure a technical workstream. An anti-corruption body may use it to organize a national measurement process. An inter-institutional task team may use it to guide meetings, identify bottlenecks, and prepare an implementation strategy. For countries with more developed systems, the Guide can also help strengthen comparability, improve data quality, refine interpretation, formalize inter-institutional collaboration, and expand measurement across the broader dimensions of the Statistical Framework. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, or in countries with more fragmented institutions and weaker administrative records, the Guide may need to be used even more selectively. In those contexts, a narrower and more adaptive first cycle may be necessary. That may include

[4] United Nations General Assembly. (2014). Resolution 68/261, Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. https://unstats.un.org/fpos/

starting with fewer indicators, relying more on selected surveys or complementary data sources, and using phased implementation to protect both statistical quality and institutional viability.

Once countries have stronger institutional and statistical capacity, they are better positioned to use the Framework and the Guide to broaden analysis across criminal offenses, preventive measures, and the enabling environment to report and address corruption.

The most useful way to work with the Guide is not to treat it as a single linear text, but as a reference that supports different stages of implementation. Some parts are more relevant at the beginning of the process. Others become more important once countries start validating data, linking records, interpreting indicators, or planning dissemination. The appendices and practical tools are intended to support this staged use.

Countries are also encouraged to use the practical tools and worksheets that accompany the Guide. These are not intended as rigid templates, but as working instruments that can help organize discussions, document decisions, and preserve institutional memory across the different phases of implementation.

1.5 Who can use this Guide?

The Guide is intended first and foremost for institutions directly involved in producing, validating, interpreting, or using corruption-related data. This includes national statistical offices, anti-corruption bodies and public integrity institutions, ministries, audit and oversight institutions, procurement authorities, judicial and prosecutorial authorities, law-enforcement bodies, and other relevant public entities.

The Guide is also intended to be usable across different institutional arrangements. Some countries operate through a single anti-corruption body. Others have multiple preventive, enforcement, disciplinary, subnational, or sector-specific institutions. Some have strong national statistical systems. Others work through more fragmented or uneven arrangements. The Guide avoids the assumption of one fixed model of anti-corruption governance.

At the same time, the Guide is not limited to public institutions. Civil society organizations, academic institutions, independent researchers, journalists, and other expert actors may also use it. Their role matters because they can bring sectoral or methodological expertise, help identify overlooked priorities, support interpretation, monitor implementation, support dissemination of results, or, with the appropriate methodological safeguards, produce independent information that can complement and contextualize official statistics. The Guide treats them as relevant participants in the broader measurement ecosystem, while remaining accurate about how far this was tested in the implementation settings on which it is based.

Because corruption measurement can be politically sensitive, users should also understand that this Guide places particular emphasis on professional independence, data safeguards, and protection from politicization. This applies especially to official statistics bodies and to other institutions that contribute data under politically charged conditions. The Guide helps countries strengthen measurement without compromising the credibility of the institutions involved.

1.6 How was this Guide developed?

This Guide was developed through a combination of practical country engagement and broader technical exchange. Its core structure was shaped by work carried out with national counterparts in

Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Kenya, where UNODC and UNSD provided technical support in response to country requests to strengthen corruption-related statistics.

The Guide also benefited from exchanges and lessons from other countries, including Brazil and Mexico, which helped refine specific aspects of the Guide. The Guide was further strengthened through comments and suggestions received from institutions and experts across different regions through open consultation. That broader feedback helped refine the text's attention to institutional diversity, civil society participation, professional independence, data politicization, inclusion, and the practical conditions required for the responsible production and use of corruption statistics.

Given this implementation-based foundation, many of the Guide's recommendations emerged from real efforts to identify priority areas, clarify institutional roles, assess data sources, organize task teams, and think through how corruption-related indicators could be produced responsibly. In that sense, the Guide reflects practice, not only concept.

The experience gained through implementation also showed that corruption measurement is shaped by institutional diversity. Countries differ in legal systems and mandates, administrative records, coordination traditions, data cultures, digital systems, and political sensitivities. This is one reason why the Guide does not present a single model as universally applicable. Its value lies instead in helping countries build processes that are flexible enough to work within their own realities while maintaining statistical quality and policy relevance.

This point is especially important for fragile and conflict-affected settings, where institutions may be fragmented, authority dispersed, and some indicators are politically sensitive or unsafe to pursue in the same way as in more consolidated environments. The Guide therefore pays particular attention to adaptive sequencing, modular implementation, do-no-harm concerns, and the need to assess political risks when working with sensitive indicators or weak data systems.

1.7 What this Guide cannot do

This Guide can help countries organize and strengthen a corruption measurement process, but it has clear limits. Recognizing those limits is important, because unrealistic expectations can weaken both implementation and interpretation.

First, the Guide does not provide indicator-by-indicator methodological specifications. It offers practical guidance on how countries can organize the institutional and statistical process, and provides general principles for analysis and interpretation, but it does not set out formulas, calculation rules, or detailed interpretive guidance for each of the 145 indicators in the Statistical Framework. More detailed indicator-specific methodological guidance may therefore be needed as countries advance in implementation.

Second, the Guide cannot assume that all countries begin from the same level of statistical capacity or institutional maturity. Some countries may already have stable data systems, legal mechanisms for inter-institutional statistics, and stronger technical capacity. Others may have incomplete records, weak comparability, low interoperability, limited quality assurance procedures, or little experience with coordinated corruption-related statistics. In lower-capacity contexts or settings with political constraints, the Guide needs to be applied selectively, with careful attention to data quality, comparability, and readiness for use.

Third, the Guide cannot provide a full policy analysis of corruption. Its role is to support the production and interpretation of statistics within the limits of the available evidence. That includes helping institutions formulate useful questions, interpret patterns in light of the definitions, sources, and limitations of the data, and understand what indicators can and cannot support. It should not be read

as a basis for broad causal claims or political judgments unsupported by the data. In this context it should however be noted that measurement results can underpin policy analysis, and complement tools and assessments such as the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism.

Finally, the Guide cannot make hidden forms of corruption fully visible where reporting may be unsafe, access to justice is weak, and vulnerable groups face unequal barriers to disclosure. That is why the Guide pays close attention to gender, inclusion, respondent safety, and enabling conditions for reporting. The Guide can help improve measurement, but the quality and meaning of corruption statistics will always depend in part on wider institutional conditions that measurement tools alone cannot create.

1.8 Confidentiality, security, and responsible data use

Confidentiality and security are not peripheral issues in corruption measurement. They are part of what makes the entire production process credible, lawful, and sustainable. Corruption-related statistics often draw on complaint systems, judicial records, disciplinary files, disclosure systems, surveys, or reporting mechanisms that may contain identifiable, sensitive, or politically charged information. For that reason, countries should treat legal requirements, confidentiality and security as cross-cutting requirements from the beginning of the process, not as a final compliance check.

The key principle is that the production of official statistics does not require the widest possible circulation of underlying records. In many cases, aggregated outputs can be produced without sharing identifiable microdata across institutions. Where record-level access is considered necessary for validation, linkage, or compilation, it should be governed by a clear legal basis, restricted access arrangements, defined responsibilities, and documented procedures for storage, transfer, retention, and deletion. Technical possibility should never be treated as sufficient justification for data use. Where identifiable or record-level data are too sensitive to be shared, institutions should consider whether the statistical purpose can instead be met through aggregated outputs, controlled access arrangements, or other privacy-preserving approaches consistent with the applicable legal framework.

Countries should also distinguish carefully between different types of information and the risks they create at different stages of the statistical process. Case files, whistleblower reports, disciplinary records, beneficial ownership information, procurement files, and survey responses do not all raise the same confidentiality concerns. Protected whistleblower reports require particularly strict treatment. For statistical measurement, the underlying reports should remain with the responsible source institution, while only counts or other aggregated, non-identifying outputs should be used, in accordance with the applicable legal framework. Other sensitive sources may likewise be retained by the source institution, with only the statistics or aggregated outputs required for measurement provided to the statistical process. Some sources may require strict access controls during production, while others may create disclosure risks primarily at the dissemination stage. Small-cell outputs, fine territorial disaggregation, or indicators involving rare categories may create re-identification risks even when direct identifiers have been removed. In such cases, suppression, aggregation, controlled access, delayed release, or other disclosure-control measures may be necessary.

Confidentiality and data protection requirements do not automatically create a barrier to measurement but can be integrated into the exercise. For example, States can choose between different levels of data-sharing and integration of sources as seen in the box below. More information on this can be found throughout the Guide in the relevant sections.

Data sources: different levels of integration and production

Level 1: Coordinated use of separate sources
Institutions keep their sources separate, but the task team helps ensure that outputs are documented, aligned in time, and interpreted together.

Level 2: Harmonized tabulation and shared statistical structure
Institutions still hold separate records, but they use aligned concepts, reference periods, and output formats so that indicators can be compiled and produced more consistently.

Level 3: Partial integration across selected sources
Some datasets are linked or combined for specific indicators where the legal, semantic, and technical conditions are sufficiently clear.

Level 4: Integrated platform or routine linkage system
Institutions operate more mature systems in which multiple validated sources can be integrated and produced regularly under stable governance and documentation rules.

Security is not only about data storage. It also concerns governance. A secure system usually requires designated custodians, documented authorization procedures, version control, audit trails where appropriate, and clear separation between those who manage source data, those who compile indicators, and those who disseminate outputs. In more advanced systems, this may involve secure environments, role-based permissions, encryption, or formal data exchange protocols. In lower-capacity settings, it may begin with simpler but still meaningful safeguards, such as password-protected files, restricted folders, named focal points, and documented transfer rules.

These issues are especially important where sensitive data are involved, in fragile and conflict-affected settings, or in environments where trust in institutions is weak. In such contexts, a poorly handled release can undermine confidence not only in the indicators, but in the broader statistical and anti-corruption process. Countries should therefore assess confidentiality and security risks at each stage: collection, validation, integration, interpretation, dissemination, and monitoring and sustainability. The question is not only whether the data can be produced, but whether they can be produced and released safely, lawfully, and without creating avoidable harm.

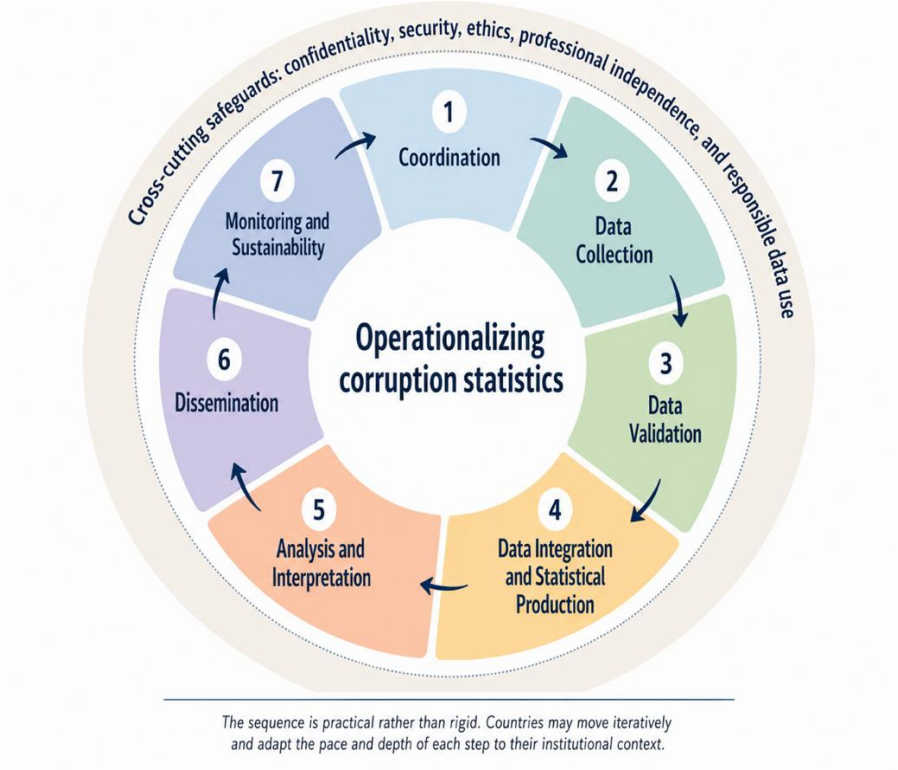
A practical rule is that no corruption-related statistical output should be disseminated unless the institutions involved can explain what confidentiality risks were considered, what safeguards were applied, and why the chosen level of disaggregation and access is appropriate. This is consistent with the broader requirements of official statistics: professional independence, methodological transparency, confidentiality protection, and clarity about limits are mutually reinforcing, not competing, principles (United Nations, 2014, 2019; European Commission, 2017).

2. Steps to produce corruption statistics

This section presents the practical sequence through which countries can begin to operationalize the UNODC Statistical Framework to Measure Corruption. The steps are designed to be usable across different institutional arrangements and levels of statistical capacity, and they should be understood as iterative rather than strictly linear. Countries may revisit earlier decisions, refine their priorities, or adjust their implementation strategy as they move forward.

Taken together, these steps offer a practical roadmap for moving from anti-corruption priorities to credible statistical production and sustained institutional use. The sequence used in this Guide was also informed, in a broad sense, by the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM),[5] as a widely used reference for organizing statistical production processes.

Figure 1. Practical sequence for operationalizing corruption statistics.

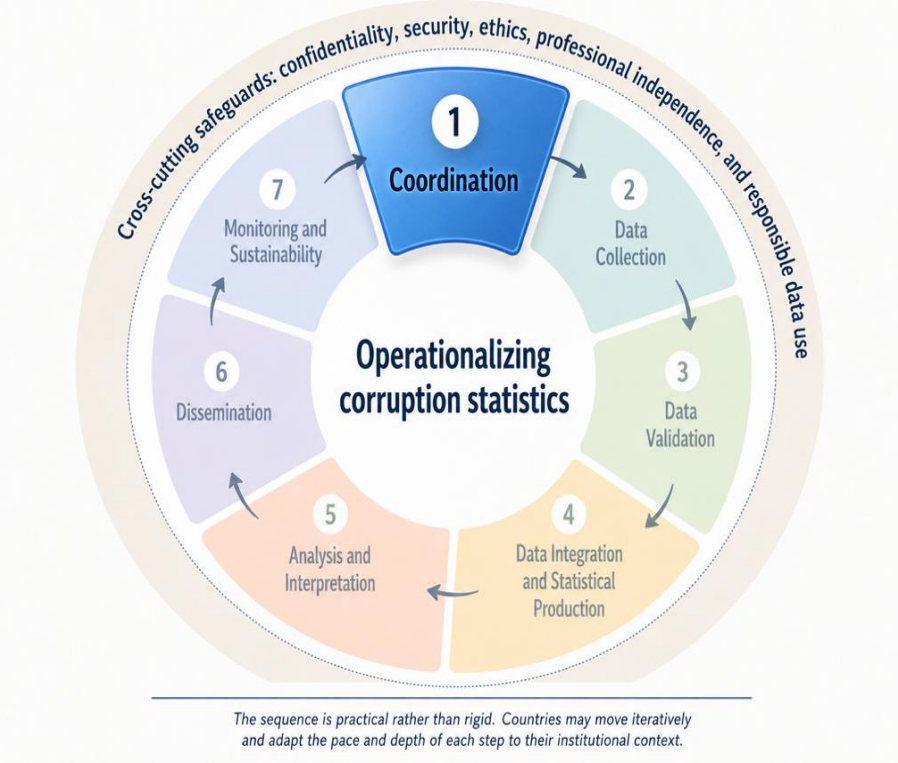


The Guide is organized around seven iterative steps, supported throughout by cross-cutting safeguards related to confidentiality, security, ethics, professional independence, and responsible data use.

[5] United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). (2025). Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), Version 5.2. Geneva: UNECE. The GSBPM is an internationally used framework that describes and organizes the main phases and subprocesses involved in producing official statistics, from identifying statistical needs through processing, analysis, dissemination, and evaluation. The Guide does not reproduce the GSBPM or require countries to work directly through it; the reference is included only to acknowledge that some of the production logics used here are broadly consistent with that model.

2.1 Step 1: Coordination

Figure 2. Step 1 in the practical sequence: Coordination



Roles in this step: **Shared leadership by the national statistical office and the anti-corruption body, with participation from other relevant institutions through the agreed coordination arrangement.**

Effective coordination is the foundation of any effort to produce corruption-related statistics. Corruption measurement requires information, access to data, mandates, technical standards, and policy knowledge that are usually distributed across several institutions. No single institution typically holds all the relevant data, all the methodological capacity, and all the institutional authority needed to organize the process on its own. Coordination is therefore not an administrative formality. It is the mechanism through which a country aligns statistical credibility, institutional relevance, legal feasibility, and practical use.

In most settings, coordination begins with a small number of institutions that can anchor the process. National statistical offices usually play a central role because they contribute methodological standards, quality assurance, documentation practices, and a connection to the national statistical system. Anti-corruption bodies or other public integrity institutions can contribute policy relevance, knowledge of the legal system and institutional priorities, and the capacity to convene additional actors from across the accountability, justice, procurement, and audit and oversight landscape. Where countries do not operate through a single anti-corruption body, the process may need to be organized through a broader set of institutions with complementary functions.

The purpose of coordination at this stage is not to create a large or permanent structure from the beginning. It is to organize the minimum institutional conditions needed to start responsibly. These conditions usually include identifying the institutions that should be involved, clarifying who holds relevant data, understanding how existing mandates and working relations operate in practice, creating a task team that can accompany the process over time, selecting initial priorities, and

determining whether there is a sufficient legal and technical basis to begin producing a first set of indicators.

Coordination should be understood as a gradual process. In some countries, it may begin with a small working team and only later evolve into a more formal inter-institutional arrangement. In others, an existing inter-agency coordination mechanism, technical working group, steering committee, or similar arrangement may already provide a foundation for the work. The Guide does not assume one fixed institutional model. What matters is that the process is credible, manageable, and appropriate to the country's legal and institutional context.

Coordination also needs to be adapted to the conditions under which countries operate. In settings with stronger statistical systems, clearer legal mandates, and more fluid and regular institutional collaboration, coordination may move relatively quickly from mapping to prioritization and operational planning. In countries with lower capacity, more fragmented settings, or in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, coordination may need to proceed more cautiously. That can require narrower first cycles, stronger attention to politically sensitive indicators, more selective reliance on available sources, and greater care with sequencing, confidentiality, and do-no-harm considerations.

The following sections present the main coordination tasks in practical sequence:

- identifying the relevant actors;
- establishing or identifying an appropriate task team;
- defining national priorities
- organizing implementation;
- clarifying data-sharing conditions;
- integrating normative and ethical safeguards; and
- building structured collaboration with non-governmental stakeholders.

2.1.1 Map key actors

The first coordination task is to identify which institutions should be involved in the corruption measurement process. This requires understanding which institutions produce, hold, validate, interpret, or use data relevant to corruption and anti-corruption. In most countries, these institutions will include a national statistical office and one or more anti-corruption or public integrity bodies. They may also include civil service bodies, audit and oversight institutions, Ombud offices, prosecution and judicial authorities, law enforcement agencies, procurement authorities, financial intelligence units, tax and customs administrations, and other relevant institutions. Not all institutions must be at the national level, but depending on the context, state or municipal institutions should be considered.

This mapping exercise should capture both formal roles and practical roles. Formal roles concern mandates established in law or regulation. Practical roles concern how institutions operate in relation to data, coordination, and decision-making. In many countries, these two dimensions do not fully coincide. Some institutions may have formal mandates but play a limited operational role in practice. Others may become central because they control strategic data, have convening capacity, or are already involved in integrity-related work across sectors.

The mapping process should therefore aim to answer a small number of concrete questions:

- Which institutions hold relevant data?
- Which institutions need to validate or interpret those data?

- Which institutions are necessary to make coordination feasible?
- Which institutions are likely to use the resulting indicators?
- Which actors outside government may provide relevant expertise or independent information?

At this stage, countries should not try to solve every coordination issue at once. The purpose is to create an initial institutional picture that can support the next steps. In practical terms, this usually means preparing a preliminary map, identifying strategic actors, and then discussing that map with the relevant institutions in an initial coordination exchange.

In the country experiences that informed this Guide, mapping was most productive when it was approached as a collaborative exercise rather than as a one-sided request for information. Institutions were more willing to engage when the purpose of the process was explained clearly, when the expected use of the data was transparent, and when the exercise was conducted as part of a broader effort to strengthen national corruption-related statistics rather than to extract information from isolated institutions.

Countries may also complement the mapping process with a short institutional assessment tool. A practical version is included in Appendix 1: Institutional Mapping and Coordination Assessment Tool. It helps identify which institutions are central for implementation, which ones require targeted engagement, where technical capacity is stronger or weaker, what data each institution can realistically contribute, and which actors are likely to be essential for validation, interpretation, or dissemination. The purpose of this tool is not to introduce abstract terminology. It is to support practical coordination decisions with a structured format.

2.1.2 Establish or identify a task team

After the initial mapping of actors, countries should identify a task team that can accompany the process across its different stages. In some countries, this may begin as a small working team. In others, it may take the form of a more formal inter-agency task force. The important point is not the label but the function: there needs to be a recognized task team that can accompany the process from the definition of priorities to validation, production, interpretation, and follow-up.

Countries do not necessarily need to establish a new inter-agency task force for this purpose. Where appropriate, the coordination function can be carried out through existing governance arrangements, such as a technical working group, statistical committee, inter-agency coordination mechanism, or other nationally appropriate structure. What matters is that the arrangement brings together the relevant statistical and anti-corruption institutions, provides clear roles and focal points, and supports regular coordination throughout the process.

In most settings, this group should include at least the national statistical office and the main anti-corruption or public integrity institution involved in the process. These two agencies should play leading roles throughout the process. Depending on the institutional architecture of the country, it may also need to include judicial institutions, prosecution services, procurement authorities, audit bodies, financial intelligence units, civil service institutions, or subnational actors.

This task team should be established early enough to shape the process, not only to manage outputs after priorities have already been selected. It should help organize the dialogue that leads to priority-setting, identify feasible data sources, clarify institutional responsibilities, and accompany the transition from broad anti-corruption concerns to a manageable statistical agenda.

In the country experiences that informed this Guide, one practical lesson was the importance of identifying focal points within the participating institutions. These focal points act as the operational contacts within the task team: they support inter-institutional coordination, facilitate follow-up, and help maintain continuity between meetings and production stages. This internal clarity matters because not every institution participates in the same way or with the same continuity.

A second lesson concerns institutional familiarity. Coordination tends to work better when the people involved familiarize themselves with and understand each other's mandates, have or gain some working knowledge of the data systems used by other institutions, and can build regular communication channels across bodies that may not normally work together. This helps to have a real coordination mechanism rather than as an occasional meeting space.

Countries may formalize this task team in different ways. In some cases, a memorandum of understanding may be appropriate. In others, internal resolutions, statistical commissions, inter-institutional committees, or operational agreements may be sufficient. The Guide does not prescribe one single legal form. What matters is that the task team has continuity, accountability, and practical work.

At a minimum, the task team should be able to:

1. accompany the process of defining priority areas;
2. identify and review relevant data sources;
3. clarify responsibilities across participating institutions;
4. organize validation and documentation tasks;
5. monitor bottlenecks and delays;
6. prepare the ground for interpretation, dissemination, and future expansion.

Countries should also anticipate turnover, competing priorities, and uneven engagement across institutions. For that reason, the task team should document decisions clearly, assign focal points where possible, and avoid relying entirely on one or two individual actors. Where feasible, countries should aim to make corruption measurement a recurring institutional process rather than a one-off exercise, with coordination and documentation routines that can support successive production cycles over time.

2.1.3 Defining priorities in measuring corruption

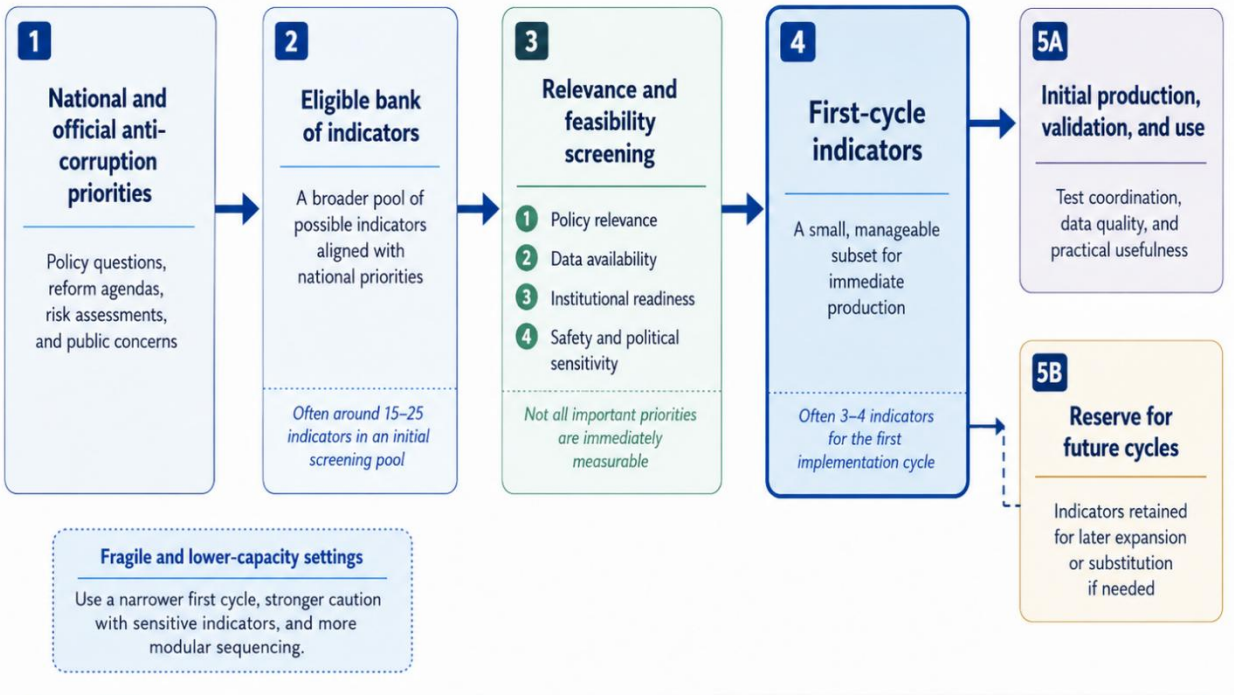
Once the main actors have been identified and a working team is in place, the next coordination task is to agree on a manageable set of national priorities. This is one of the most strategic steps in the process, and it should be led by the anti-corruption body, since that institution usually has the clearest view of the country's anti-corruption priorities. While the task team plays an essential supporting role, the identification of priority areas should not be treated as a purely technical exercise detached from the country's official anti-corruption agenda but should be linked to existing priorities and processes to ensure relevance, impact, and sustainability of the process. For example, the priorities could be taken from a national anti-corruption strategy, tying the indicators and the measurement exercise into a framework to monitor, evaluate, and inform the implementation and effectiveness of the strategy. Priority-setting should begin with the policy questions that the country most needs to address. These questions may emerge from anti-corruption strategies, public integrity plans, risk assessments, national reform agendas, major public concerns, or recurring weaknesses identified by institutions. Civil society actors or other non-governmental stakeholders could also be consulted in the identification of priorities.

The selection of priorities should not be driven only by conceptual relevance. It must also consider feasibility. A theme may be nationally important but impossible to measure responsibly in the short term if data are not available, if mandates are unclear, or if the institutions involved are not ready to coordinate. Conversely, a country may have administratively feasible indicators in areas that are not yet central to the policy agenda. Good coordination helps reconcile these two sides of the process: relevance and feasibility.

In practice, countries usually need several rounds of communication to reach this point. Priorities are often refined through meetings, technical exchanges, background reviews, and workshops with the main institutions involved. The process can take time, particularly where many national priorities exist, where mandates are distributed across several bodies, or where data relevance is not immediately recognized. For that reason, countries should avoid treating priority-setting as a single workshop outcome. It is more realistic to treat it as a process of convergence.

A useful working rule is to begin with a small number of priorities. In many settings, three to five thematic areas may be sufficient, although countries with greater capacity may choose to work with a broader scope. Once those priorities have been identified, countries should not artificially limit the number of indicators considered within each theme. Rather, they should review the relevant indicators in the Statistical Framework and select a coherent set that captures the main dimensions of the issue, considering data availability, quality, institutional capacity, and available resources. For example, measuring bribery may require combining different types of indicators, including, where relevant and feasible, measures related to prevalence, reporting, investigation, prosecution, or conviction. The objective is not to minimize the number of indicators, but to begin with a scope that is both analytically meaningful and operationally sustainable. The indicator set can then be expanded or refined in subsequent cycles as experience, data sources, and capacity develop.

Figure 3. From national anti-corruption priorities to a first statistical agenda



This diagram illustrates how countries can move from broad anti-corruption priorities to a manageable first statistical agenda. The process begins with nationally owned policy priorities, develops a broader bank of eligible indicators, screens them for both relevance and feasibility, and selects a small first-cycle subset for immediate production. Indicators not selected at the outset remain useful as a reserve for later expansion or replacement.

In lower-capacity or fragile and conflict-affected settings, priority-setting may need to be even more selective. Some indicators may be politically sensitive, institutionally unsafe, or impossible to produce with available data. In such cases, a narrower first cycle and a modular implementation path may be more appropriate.

The country experiences that informed this Guide illustrate this process clearly. In all three countries, priority-setting was carried out through structured dialogue involving the national statistical office, the main anti-corruption institution, and other relevant entities. The result was not a purely external or technical selection of indicators, but a translation of country priorities into a feasible statistical agenda. These first outputs should be understood as entry points within a broader measurement agenda, not as a complete definition of the country's anti-corruption priorities.

Box 1. From national priorities to a first statistical agenda: examples from three country experiences

Colombia

In Colombia, the process was led by the Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE) and the Secretaría de Transparencia, linking indicator selection to national anti-corruption policy instruments and available institutional data. The inter-institutional work identified a broader set of priorities and resulted in a first group of indicators tied to public procurement, bribery prevalence and perception, and other policy-relevant areas. The process showed the importance of aligning measurement choices with national policy strategies and with the capacities of the national statistical system.

Dominican Republic

In the Dominican Republic, the process was led by the Oficina Nacional de Estadística (ONE) and the Dirección General de Ética e Integridad Gubernamental (DIGEIG), resulting in a first prioritized set of indicators across three dimensions of the Framework. These included bribery prosecution, bribery conviction, assets recovered from bribery, frequency of audits, public service laws, and access to information. This illustrates a sequencing approach in which criminal offences, preventive measures, and enabling environment indicators can be combined in a manageable first cycle.

Kenya

In Kenya, the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) and the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) led the process, which moved from broad anti-corruption priorities to a first set of fifteen indicators, followed by a smaller subset of three indicators selected for immediate production and analysis: assets recovered from money laundering, transparency in procurement, and embezzlement conviction. This sequencing showed the value of moving from broad policy concerns to a smaller operational subset, while also identifying the institutions required for each indicator.

Practical lesson

Countries do not need to start with many indicators. They need a first subset that is policy-relevant, institutionally owned, and feasible to produce with available sources and coordination arrangements.

2.1.4 Define an implementation strategy

Once a manageable set of priorities has been identified, the country needs an implementation strategy. This does not need to be a long or highly formal document at the outset. What matters is that the institutions involved share a clear understanding of what will be done first, who will do it, what data sources will be used, what the expected outputs are, and what safeguards or support conditions may be necessary.

A sound implementation strategy usually includes:

1. the priority themes selected for the first measurement cycle;
2. the initial indicators or outputs to be produced;
3. the institutions responsible for data production, validation, interpretation, and use;
4. the data sources expected to be used;
5. the main legal, technical, or institutional constraints that may affect implementation;

6. a realistic timeline; and
7. a basic plan for dissemination and follow-up.

The strategy should also be based on a simple gap analysis. Countries do not need a highly elaborate assessment at this stage, but they do need to know what is already in place and what is missing. This includes the existence of usable administrative records, survey instruments, legal mechanisms for data exchange, technical staff, documentation practices, interoperability conditions, and institutional coordination arrangements. The purpose of the gap analysis is not to delay the process, but to make sure that the implementation plan is anchored in actual capacity.

Implementation strategies should also be flexible. Countries may discover new constraints once data collection begins, or they may identify additional opportunities as institutions become more engaged. For that reason, the strategy should be treated as a working instrument that can be refined over time without losing coherence.

2.1.5 Clarify data-sharing and legal arrangements

Corruption-related indicators often depend on information held by more than one institution. This makes data-sharing and legal arrangements a central part of coordination.[6] In some countries, institutions may already produce some relevant statistics, have legal mechanisms that allow joint statistical work, access to administrative records, validation processes, or confidentiality protections. In others, such arrangements may need to be clarified or strengthened before indicator production can proceed responsibly.

The key issue is not simply whether institutions are willing to share data. It is whether the legal, technical, and procedural conditions for sharing or accessing information are clear enough to support a credible process. In many settings, institutions can contribute aggregated statistics without sharing underlying records. In other cases, especially for more complex indicators, limited forms of controlled access to underlying information may be necessary. Where that is the case, safeguards for confidentiality, privacy, and responsible use become essential.

Countries should therefore assess:

1. What legal basis exists for inter-institutional statistical work;
2. Whether current mandates permit data access or exchange for this purpose;
3. What level of detail is required to produce the selected indicators;
4. What confidentiality rules apply; and
5. What data governance arrangements are needed to protect sensitive information.

This issue should be handled with realism. Not all indicators require the same degree of data access. Not all countries will face the same legal constraints. In some regions, strict data protection rules may limit the exchange of identifiable records and make aggregated statistics the main feasible option. In other contexts, more direct forms of controlled access may be possible if supported by appropriate safeguards. The Guide therefore emphasizes careful assessment rather than one universal model.

Data-sharing also has a technical side. Some indicators can only be produced by bringing together information held by different institutions. This is easier when institutions use a common reference that allows records to be matched, such as a case number, person or company identifier, or standardized territorial code, and when they classify the same concepts in comparable ways. For example, if a complaint, investigation, and court case are recorded under different identifiers or use different

[6] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2024). Guidelines for the Governance of Statistical Data in the Criminal Justice System. Vienna: United Nations.

definitions of the same offense, they may not be reliably linked. Where these conditions are missing, comparability and integration become more limited. Countries should document these limitations clearly rather than assuming that data can be linked seamlessly.

2.1.6 Establish normative, ethical, and professional safeguards

To protect the integrity of the process, corruption measurement requires normative, ethical, and professional safeguards. Corruption-related data are especially sensitive because they may affect institutional reputation, public trust, ongoing cases, vulnerable persons, or politically contentious debates. This makes it essential to establish clear safeguards from the beginning.

At a minimum, countries should ensure that the production of corruption-related statistics is guided by:

1. professional independence;
2. methodological transparency;
3. confidentiality and privacy protection;
4. respondent and source safety;
5. safeguards against undue political influence; and
6. clear documentation of limitations and uncertainty.

These safeguards are particularly important when dealing with incomplete administrative records, politically sensitive indicators, disaggregated outputs, or information that may expose individuals or institutions to harm if handled carelessly. In some contexts, the main concern will be confidentiality. In others, it may be reputational harm, selective political use of data, or weak controls over access and release.

Ethical and professional safeguards apply across different types of statistical work. In survey-based work, this may include informed consent, respondent safety, and appropriate handling of direct identifiers. In administrative data work, it may include controlled access, appropriate documentation, and disclosure controls where small numbers or detailed geographic breakdowns could create identification risks. The national statistical office can provide guidance on the statistical safeguards relevant to the production and dissemination of official statistics, while participating institutions should follow applicable national laws, government policies, and established procedures. In all cases, neutrality in interpretation and communication remains essential.

These issues are not optional additions. They are part of what makes corruption statistics credible. They also connect directly to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, especially where professional independence and protection from politicization are concerned.

2.1.7 Strengthen collaboration with non-governmental stakeholders

A credible corruption measurement process benefits from structured collaboration beyond government. Civil society organizations, academic institutions, companies, media, and other non-governmental stakeholders can contribute expertise, independent scrutiny, contextual knowledge, and, potentially, information that complements and contextualizes official outputs. Their role can be especially important where public institutions face credibility challenges, where some forms of corruption are underreported, or where implementation needs to be monitored from outside institutions or even the state.

This broader role of non-governmental stakeholders is also reflected in information shared by States. In response to a questionnaire circulated by UNODC in May 2024, 27 States provided information on methodologies and indicators for measuring corruption and the effectiveness of anti-corruption

frameworks. Almost all submissions highlighted the role of non-governmental stakeholders in the development and implementation of measurement exercises, as well as the usefulness of parallel studies or surveys conducted outside government to inform official work and provide complementary evidence. The private sector, civil society, and academia were among the actors most frequently mentioned, alongside other stakeholders such as journalists, judges, analysts, international organizations, donors, and trade associations.[7]

The value of these actors is not limited to consultation. They may contribute at different stages of the process by:

1. Helping identify relevant priorities;
2. bringing attention to forms of corruption that are less visible in administrative data;
3. supporting interpretation and public communication;
4. producing complementary research or statistics; and
5. strengthening accountability around how the indicators are interpreted and used.

At the same time, the form of their participation will vary across countries. In the implementation experiences that informed this Guide, the process was centered mainly on public institutions. The Guide remains faithful to that experience, but it also recognizes that stronger and more structured engagement with civil society, academia and other non-governmental stakeholders can improve relevance, legitimacy, and accountability. The practical question is not only whether external stakeholders participate, but what functions they serve in each phase of the production cycle. This may include helping identify blind spots during coordination, contributing complementary evidence during data collection, supporting plausibility checks, enriching contextual interpretation, assisting public communication, or helping monitor follow-up and use.

This is especially important in contexts where official data systems are weak, uneven, or politically sensitive. In such cases, a broader measurement ecosystem may be necessary. That includes not only official statistics, but also a safe and enabling environment in which non-state actors can produce relevant independent information and engage with official outputs without undue pressure.

Collaboration should therefore be organized in practical ways that fit the national context. This may include inviting non-state actors in the task team or organizing consultations, advisory groups, thematic exchanges, partnerships with academic units, or mechanisms for reviewing and discussing outputs. What matters is that the process remains transparent, useful, and credible to the range of actors who rely on corruption-related evidence.

Box 2. Non-governmental stakeholders as functional partners in corruption measurement

The role and contribution of non-governmental stakeholders depend on what part of the corruption problem is being measured and at what stage of the production cycle they participate in.

Priority-setting
Non-governmental stakeholders can help identify blind spots, high-risk sectors, barriers to reporting, and forms of corruption that may be less visible in official discussions.

Data collection and validation
Non-governmental stakeholders can contribute complementary evidence, local knowledge, and

[7] CAC/COSP/WG.4/2024/2.

plausibility checks, especially where official records are incomplete or where lived experience differs from administrative classifications.

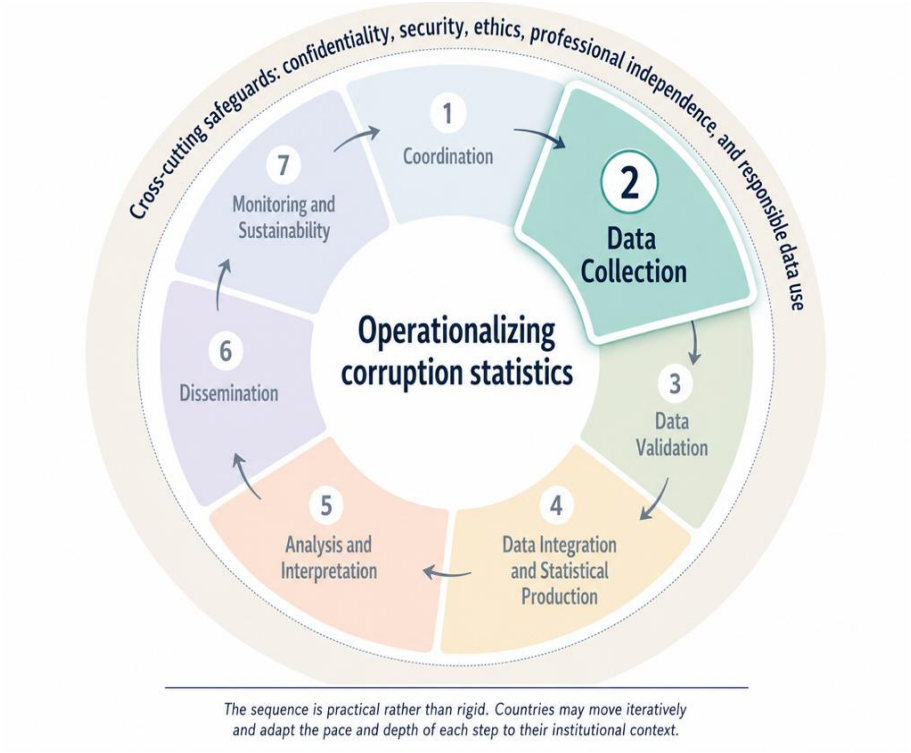
Interpretation and dissemination
Non-governmental stakeholders can provide contextual knowledge that supports the interpretation of results, identify reporting barriers that may affect what the indicators capture, and help communicate findings to the wider public.

Monitoring and accountability
Non-governmental stakeholders may also help track whether indicators are used in practice and contribute to public accountability around follow-up and the use of measurement results.

The participation of non-governmental stakeholders can strengthen relevance, interpretation, scrutiny, and public use when roles are clearly defined.

2.2 Step 2: Data collection

Figure 4. Step 2 in the practical sequence: Data Collection



Roles in this step: The national statistical office would normally lead the technical organization of data collection, working closely with the anti-corruption body and the institutions that own or produce the relevant data sources.

Data collection is the stage at which national priorities begin to take statistical form. Once countries have identified a manageable set of corruption-related priorities, clarified the institutions involved, established or identified an appropriate task team, and defined a strategy for the production of those statistics, the next question is how to obtain the information required to produce the selected indicators in a credible and sustainable way.

This step should not be understood as a simple search for as much information as possible. Its purpose is to identify which sources are relevant, reliable enough for the intended use, and feasible to sustain over time. In corruption measurement, the existence of data does not automatically mean that the data is suitable for interpretation. Data collection therefore needs to be guided by clear questions, transparent source selection, and realistic judgments about coverage, comparability, accessibility, and institutional viability. For example, an institution may have records on corruption complaints, but those records may not be suitable for producing a national indicator if they cover only part of the country, use definitions that have changed over time, or are not collected consistently. The source exists, but its suitability for statistical production still needs to be assessed.

A useful corruption measurement system usually combines more than one source of evidence. Administrative records can show how institutions respond to corruption-related events. Surveys can capture experiences, perceptions, trust, and reporting behavior that may not appear in official records. Complementary sources, including information generated by civil society, academia, or digital systems, may help identify blind spots, contextualize patterns, or cross-check official outputs. The

value of the data collection stage lies in organizing these sources in a way that is coherent with the selected priorities and proportionate to the country's capacity.

This step also requires caution. Corruption is usually hidden, underreported, politically sensitive, and unevenly recorded across institutions. Some forms of corruption are easier to observe through administrative systems, while others are more likely to appear through surveys or complementary evidence, and others might fully evade detection. In many contexts, the most important question is not only whether a source exists, but whether it is credible and meets quality standards. Data collection should therefore be linked from the beginning to later stages of validation, integration, interpretation, and dissemination.

The task team established or identified in Step 1 plays an important role at this stage. Because the participating institutions were involved in the earlier coordination process, they will often know which institutions hold relevant information, which units should be contacted, which sources are more mature, and where the main access or documentation constraints are likely to arise. In practical terms, the task team helps determine which institutions to approach, which focal points to engage, which records are likely to be usable, and how to proceed in a way that is institutionally realistic. Without that collective knowledge, data collection can become slower, less focused, and more vulnerable to misunderstandings about mandates, ownership, or source availability.

The ongoing experience in the Dominican Republic illustrates this transition from prioritization to data collection. After identifying an initial set of indicators, participating institutions worked to clarify the corresponding data sources, institutional responsibilities, and access arrangements needed for production. The process has subsequently moved toward obtaining the required data for validation and later interpretation, illustrating how data collection often involves not only identifying a source, but also organizing the institutional conditions required to make that source usable.

Data collection also looks different across contexts. In countries with stronger administrative systems, more indicators may be built from official records and linked data. In lower-capacity contexts, or in fragile and conflict-affected settings, countries may need to rely more selectively on a smaller number of robust administrative sources, targeted surveys, and complementary information. In those cases, careful sequencing becomes especially important. A narrow but credible first cycle is preferable to an ambitious but weak collection strategy.

The following sections explain how the main source types can be used in practice and what each of them can contribute to the three conceptual dimensions of the Statistical Framework: criminal offences, preventive measures, and enabling environment. Section 2.2.1 focuses on administrative data and the institutional records most commonly used in corruption measurement. Section 2.2.2 explains how surveys can capture experiences, perceptions, levels of trust, and reporting patterns that do not always appear in official systems. Section 2.2.3 examines complementary sources, including the role of civil society, academia, and other non-state actors where relevant. Section 2.2.4 compares the benefits and drawbacks of different types of sources and indicators to help countries make practical choices. This step is also supported by practical tools, including Appendix 3: Data Source Scoping and Selection Worksheet, which helps countries compare potential sources in a structured way before moving to validation.

2.2.1 Administrative data sources

2.2.1.1 Administrative records

Administrative records are often the most immediate source of information for corruption measurement. They are generated by institutions in the course of their regular functions and can provide continuous evidence on detection, reporting, investigation, prosecution, adjudication,

sanctions and other legal consequences for corruption offenses, procurement, audits, access to information, public integrity systems, and other areas relevant to corruption and anti-corruption.

Their value lies in the fact that they are already embedded in institutional processes. They can reveal how the state records corruption-related events, how institutions respond, where bottlenecks arise, and whether preventive or enforcement systems are functioning. When records are sufficiently standardized and documented, they can also support repeated measurement over time.

Conceptually, administrative data are relevant across all three dimensions of the Statistical Framework. They are especially important for criminal offenses, where they can support indicators on detection, reporting, investigation, prosecution, conviction, confiscation, or asset recovery, as well as administrative consequences and sanctions. They are also important for preventive measures, where relevant data can include data on procurement, audits, integrity controls, declaration systems, or public service regulation. Administrative data is also particularly important for access to justice. Complaint systems, access-to-information mechanisms, whistleblower channels, disciplinary records, and adjudication pathways help show whether people can report concerns, obtain responses, and move through institutional processes in a way that is visible to the state. In many settings, the absence or weakness of these administrative traces is itself informative about the limits of access to remedies and accountability.

Common administrative systems that may generate information for corruption-related statistics include:

- police, prosecution, and judicial records;
- audit reports and oversight findings;
- procurement and public finance records;
- complaint and case management systems;
- asset and interest declaration systems;
- access-to-information systems;
- whistleblower or reporting mechanisms;
- disciplinary and civil service records;
- anti-money laundering and financial intelligence systems; and
- integrity-related records held by ministries, regulators, or specialized agencies.

Identifying these systems as potential statistical sources does not imply that underlying case files, whistleblower reports, or other identifiable records should be transferred or shared for measurement purposes. Wherever possible, the responsible institution should provide the statistical aggregates or indicator inputs required for production. Record-level access should be considered only where it is legally authorized, methodologically necessary, and subject to appropriate confidentiality and security safeguards.

Administrative records can contain sensitive and personal information, so applicable data protection, confidentiality, and privacy requirements should be considered from the outset. The cross-cutting principles set out in Section 1.8 on Confidentiality, Security, and Responsible Data Use apply directly to the identification, access, transfer, and use of administrative sources.

Administrative data are particularly useful when the country wants to measure institutional response, procedural progression, sanctions, resources, controls, compliance, or reporting mechanisms. They may also help identify where risks are concentrated and where state institutions are most actively engaged.

At the same time, administrative data have important limits. They reflect what institutions record, not necessarily the full scale of the phenomenon. They may be incomplete, fragmented, inconsistently classified, weakly documented, or difficult to compare across institutions. Some records may be shaped by changes in law, institutional practice, reporting incentives, or enforcement priorities rather

than by underlying behavioral change. For that reason, administrative data is essential, but it should rarely be interpreted in isolation.

Administrative sources are also affected by institutional diversity. In some countries, the relevant records may be held mainly by central institutions. In others, subnational entities, decentralized bodies, or multiple agencies may hold essential parts of the data. The Guide therefore does not assume a single institutional structure. Countries should use the agreed task team to identify the most relevant source owners for each selected priority.

The inter-institutional task team is especially useful here. The institutions involved in this process will often know, or be able to determine, which relevant records or data sources exist, whether the required information is already compiled in a usable form or needs to be assembled from different records or units within an institution, what level of access is possible, how variables are defined, and what practical obstacles may arise when requesting or compiling the information. They can also help distinguish between information that is recorded for administrative purposes and information that is sufficiently complete, structured, and documented for statistical production. This reduces the risk of building an indicator around a source that looks promising on paper but is too unstable, incomplete, or poorly documented in practice.

Were useful, administrative records should be documented early through a short data mapping exercise. This can help countries determine who owns the source, what it covers, how often it is updated, whether it is accessible, and whether it is suitable for immediate use or only for a later phase of the process.

2.2.1.2 The role of emerging technologies

Increasingly, countries work with digital systems, such as e-governance, e-procurement, reporting platforms, disclosure systems, or interoperable registries in their anti-corruption efforts. The availability of data sources in digital format can expand the range of information available, improve timeliness, or help link administrative processes that were previously disconnected.

The availability of data in digital format allows for the linking and cross-checking of different databases, e.g., procurement information, asset and interest declaration systems, beneficial ownership registries, sanctions databases, or access-to-information records. These combinations can help identify conflict-of-interest risks, opacity in supplier structures, repeated red flags across contracting processes, or weaknesses in the public availability of integrity-relevant information. Even before advanced linkage is possible, countries often benefit from narrower improvements such as shared reference tables, common agency identifiers, agreed data dictionaries, and routine transfer arrangements between source institutions and the national statistical office.

This section looks at how digital systems can support production, integration, and interpretation of corruption-related statistics.

Examples of relevant digital systems may include:

- digital procurement systems;
- digital case management systems;
- online public complaint or reporting portals;
- digital asset and beneficial ownership registries;
- e-government systems that record transactions or service interactions;
- digital integrated financial management systems; and
- digital platforms that improve access to public records.

These sources may be valuable because they contain structured information, permit regular updates, or help cross-check data from other institutions. They can also reduce dependence on fragmented paper-based systems and support more consistent documentation.

As with paper-based systems, emerging digital sources should not be assumed to be automatically reliable or complete. A disclosure system, for example, may create transparency in principle, but if the information cannot be verified against other sources, its value for measurement may remain limited. Likewise, digital systems may differ in coverage, legal status, interoperability, institutional ownership, and technical quality. Some are designed for operational management rather than for statistical production. Others may contain partial or highly selective information.

Inter-institutional coordination is again important here because it can help distinguish between:

- digital systems that are relevant for the selected indicators;
- systems that are useful for verification or cross-checking;
- systems that contain operational data but are not yet suitable for statistics; and
- sources that may become relevant only in later implementation phases.

In lower-capacity settings, countries may need to use emerging technologies and complementary sources selectively. The main question should always be whether the source helps produce a more credible first cycle, not whether it appears innovative.

Country Focus: Brazil, how government-led data systems and AI support corruption statistics

At the federal level, Brazil's Office of the Comptroller General (CGU)—in coordination with oversight bodies such as the Federal Court of Accounts (TCU)—has built a government-led digital ecosystem that supports prevention and control: open procurement/spending portals (e.g., Compras.gov), interoperability with audit and ombudsman systems (e-CGU, Fala.BR), common identifiers, and validation routines before data feed analytics. This stewardship aligns operational work with UNODC Framework dimensions on preventive measures and the enabling environment.

Note on NSO leadership. In many country contexts, the National Statistical Office (NSO) should lead—or co-lead with integrity bodies—the integration of validated administrative data into official statistics. In Brazil, the initiatives highlighted here are anchored primarily in CGU/TCU. As risk analytics and indicators mature, a structured partnership with the NSO (IBGE) would be consistent with international good practices for quality assurance, metadata governance, and official dissemination.

AI/ML solutions currently in use at CGU (selected).

- ALICE – Bid, Contract, and Public Notice Analyzer. NLP models scan procurement portals daily (Compras.gov, Licitações-e, Licitações CAIXA) to flag irregularities and open tasks in e-CGU.
- LAION – Access-to-Information assistant. Embeddings/LLMs embedded in Fala.BR suggest legal bases, find similar requests, and summarize complex appeals.
- Personal-data detector for ATI documents. NER models (e.g., GliNER) and image models (ResNet) locate identifiers for disclosure control.
- FARO – Ombudsman risk scoring. Supervised classifiers triage complaints from Fala.BR as eligible/ineligible.
- Fine Mesh of Agreements. A supervised model scores the probability of rejection of transfer accountability reports, integrated with Transferegov.br.

- LIA – CGU's secure generative-AI assistant. Internal interface/APIs provide controlled access to LLMs for drafting, triage, and analysis.
- AuditPesquisa (RAG for audits). Retrieval-augmented generation answers questions using >3,000 public audit reports, returning sourced excerpts.
- CGU-Insight. An AI workbench that accelerates audits (finding matrices, follow-up checks, ETP/TR reviews) via Azure OpenAI and RAG, integrated with e-CGU.

Governance. The Data Science Governance Commission (CGCD) issues standards, vets projects, and monitors responsible use. Sensitive applications apply the human-in-the-loop principle; models and decisions are logged; privacy/disclosure controls are embedded in workflows.

Why does this matter for statistics. Government systems generate structured, validated administrative records (procurement, audits, complaints) with audit trails; interoperability enables multi-source indicators; and documented, interpretable analytics support oversight dashboards and referrals. AI complements—rather than replaces—official statistics and human judgment.

Transferable lesson. Build validated, interoperable administrative data first; then deploy analytics within a clear legal and governance Framework—with the NSO leading or co-leading integration for official statistics in line with international practice.

2.2.2 Corruption Surveys

Surveys are a critical source of corruption-related evidence because many dimensions of corruption do not appear fully in administrative records. Surveys can capture experiences with public services, instances of bribery, perceptions of corruption, confidence in reporting, trust in institutions, and barriers to seeking remedies. They can also provide population-based or business-based information that is difficult to derive from institutional data alone. Surveys can address different populations, such as citizens, public officials, or businesses, covering experiences of corruption from different angles.

Experience-based surveys are particularly valuable because they capture events that may never be formally reported. In many settings, bribery and other forms of corruption may remain invisible in official systems, while coercion, fear of retaliation, and other barriers can further discourage reporting. Survey data can therefore broaden the picture and help countries understand what administrative sources leave out.

Perception studies also have a role, but their use requires great care. Perceptions are personal opinions, and thus not the same as observed events. They may reflect media attention, political climate, trust in institutions, major scandals, or broader social narratives. Even so, perception indicators can still be useful when interpreted cautiously, especially in relation to trust, legitimacy, reporting confidence, and public expectations about accountability. When coupled with questions on actual experience, results on perception can, for example, show whether perceived and experienced corruption correlate. If perception is much higher than experience, it can indicate a lack of trust in public institutions that anti-corruption bodies may wish to address.

Surveys are also relevant across the three dimensions of the Statistical Framework, although in a different way from administrative records. For criminal offenses, experience-based surveys can help measure bribery or other illicit interactions that remain underreported in official systems. For preventive measures, surveys can help assess whether people or businesses experience public services, procurement processes, controls, or administrative procedures as transparent and fair in practice. For the enabling environment, surveys are especially useful for measuring trust, reporting confidence, fear

of retaliation, perceived institutional responsiveness, and public views about whether anti-corruption systems are accessible and credible.

Countries may rely on:

1. dedicated corruption surveys;
2. victimization or governance-related surveys with corruption modules;
3. household surveys that include questions on public service interactions;
4. business surveys on integrity, transparency, or regulatory burden; and
5. targeted surveys for specific sectors or user groups.

Survey design should follow clear methodological standards. This includes careful questionnaire design, transparent metadata, respondent protection, appropriate sampling where relevant, and clear documentation of what the indicator does and does not measure. In sensitive areas, the wording of questions, the mode of collection, and the protection of respondents become especially important. For countries wishing to conduct a survey, the UNODC-UNDP Manual on Corruption Surveys provides methodological guidance on the measurement of corruption through surveys.[8]

Surveys are also essential for inclusion. Some forms of corruption affect groups differently, and some barriers to reporting are patterned by gender, age, social position, territorial inequality, or access to institutions. In some areas, including sexual corruption, ordinary administrative systems may be especially weak. In such cases, surveys and other relevant data sources may be needed to capture experiences that are otherwise absent or underrepresented in administrative records, particularly among groups whose experiences are less visible in official statistics.

In lower-capacity, fragile and conflict-affected settings, surveys may sometimes play a larger role than administrative records, especially where institutions record cases weakly or unevenly. Countries may therefore choose to begin with a narrower and more selective strategy that combines a few carefully designed survey-based indicators with the strongest available administrative sources.

2.2.3 Complementary sources

Complementary sources outside government may also be relevant and useful. Civil society organizations, the private sector, the media, academic institutions, observatories, investigative projects, or sector-specific initiatives may generate data or structured information on corruption risks, reporting barriers, enforcement gaps, access to justice, or implementation challenges. These sources do not replace official statistics, but they may be especially useful where official records do not provide sufficient data. In such cases, civil society observatories, information held by the private sector or media, academic work, or targeted documentation initiatives may complement available data, help fill data gaps that matter for indicator calculation and interpretation, or provide useful contextual information. Their quality, coverage, methodology, and suitability for statistical use should be assessed before they are incorporated into official statistical production. Where such sources are used for official statistical purposes, their use should be consistent with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and applicable national statistical quality standards. The national statistical office or other competent statistical authority should determine whether and how such information is suitable for statistical use, as discussed in the next section.

[8] https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Crime-statistics/CorruptionManual_2018_web.pdf

2.2.4 Benefits and drawbacks of different data sources and indicators

No single source can capture corruption adequately. Each source has strengths and limitations, and each supports different kinds of indicators and different levels of inference. Countries therefore need a practical way to evaluate data sources before deciding which ones to use for the first cycle of measurement.

Surveys are valuable because they can capture experiences, perceptions, reporting behavior, and barriers to disclosure that do not appear in official systems. They are especially useful for dimensions of the Framework where the goal is to understand what people, firms, or specific groups experience, perceive, or trust. Their main limitations include cost, workload, periodicity, questionnaire sensitivity, and the fact that some indicators depend heavily on design choices and respondent interpretation.

Administrative records are often valuable because they are embedded in regular institutional work and may support repeated production over time. Their main advantages are availability, continuity, procedural detail, and direct connection to institutional response. They are especially useful for parts of the Framework related to criminal offenses and many preventive measures, as well as some elements of the enabling environment. Their main limitations are fragmentation, underreporting, inconsistent classification, incomplete coverage, and varying documentation standards.

Digital or interoperable systems can be valuable because they improve structure, traceability, and possible linkage across sources. They can support administrative records from criminal justice and other institutions, depending on what the national systems actually record and how mature these are. Some digital systems can be especially useful because they organize information that would otherwise remain fragmented. This may include, for example, digital beneficial ownership registers, procurement platforms, asset declaration systems, or access-to-information records. Their value depends on how clearly and comprehensively they are documented, how regularly they are updated, whether data are verified, and whether they can be used responsibly for statistical purposes. Their main advantages are timeliness and potential analytical depth. Their main limitations include uneven maturity, uncertain interoperability, incomplete verification, legal restrictions, and the risk of treating operational systems as if they were already statistical products.

Complementary non-state sources can be valuable because they bring contextual knowledge and attention to underreported issues. They may be especially useful in relation to the enabling environment, reporting barriers, and forms of corruption that do not appear clearly in official systems. Their advantages include flexibility, proximity to affected sectors, and the ability to reveal blind spots. Their limitations include uneven coverage, variable standardization, and the fact that they may not always support regular national production without additional methodological work.

Countries should therefore evaluate sources not only by availability, but also by asking:

1. What exactly does this source capture?
2. What part of the corruption problem does it miss?
3. How complete is its coverage?
4. How stable is it over time?
5. How accessible is it for statistical use?
6. What are the main legal, practical, or technical constraints?
7. Is it suitable for immediate use, or only for a later stage?

Effective inter-institutional coordination is central to data collection because it helps translate coordination into practical access to information and data sources. Its members can help:

1. identify which institution actually holds the relevant data;
2. determine which unit or focal point should be contacted;
3. clarify whether the source exists in practice or only formally;

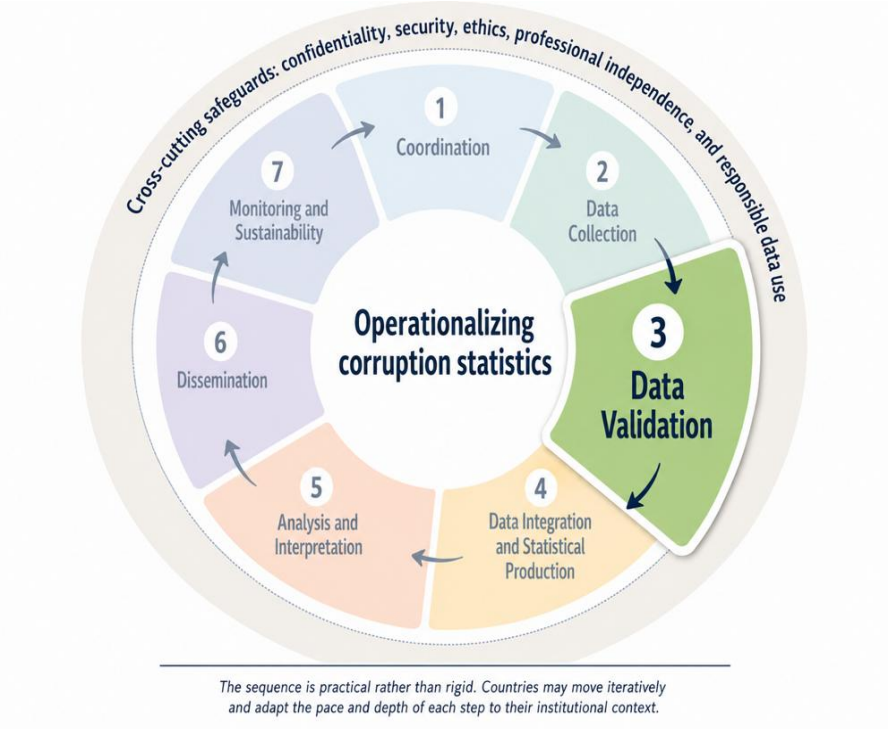
4. explain what the variables mean and how the records are produced;
5. identify legal or technical constraints early;
6. distinguish between sources that are immediately usable and those that require further preparation;
7. and support contact with institutions not initially included in the first coordination meetings.

In practical terms, the coordination helps countries move from general knowledge that “data should exist somewhere” to a more precise understanding of where the information is, who controls it, and what conditions apply to its use.

To support this step, countries may use Appendix 3: Data Source Scoping and Selection Worksheet, which helps evaluate potential sources in terms of relevance, coverage, access, periodicity, strengths, limitations, and immediate suitability for use. This tool is intended to support practical decisions during the data collection stage and to create a clearer bridge toward the later validation process.

2.3 Step 3: Data validation

Figure 5. Step 3 in the practical sequence: Data Validation



Roles in this step: The national statistical office should normally lead the technical validation process, working with the anti-corruption body and the institutions that own, produce, or interpret the relevant data sources.

Data validation is the stage in which countries assess whether the information collected is sound, coherent, and well understood to support the production of corruption-related statistics. It is a technical step, but it is also a practical one. Validation helps determine whether the selected data sources can actually produce the indicators prioritized by countries, and under what conditions those indicators can be interpreted responsibly (United Nations, 2019; Iwig et al., 2013).

In the context of official statistics, validation refers to a technical assessment of whether a source is fit for its intended statistical purpose. In practice, this means examining whether the data is sufficiently complete, internally coherent, conceptually aligned, adequately documented, and sufficiently comparable for the indicator they are expected to support. (United Nations, 2019; Iwig et al., 2013).

Validation is especially important in corruption measurement. Compared with long-established domains such as national accounts, labor statistics, or major social indicators, corruption-related statistics are still a more recent and less institutionalized field of official statistical production.

Validation is essential because the existence of a data source does not guarantee that it is ready for statistical production. Sources may exist but contain missing values, inconsistent classifications, unstable definitions, weak documentation, duplicated records, unclear denominators, territorial asymmetries, or legal and procedural constraints that affect interpretation. In corruption measurement, these risks are especially important because indicators often depend on records created for administrative, legal, or operational purposes rather than for official statistics (Iwig et al., 2013; United Nations, 2019).

Validation is not a purely isolated technical exercise carried out by one institution after data collection has ended. It is a collaborative process that depends on the knowledge of the institutions that own, produce, document, or interpret the data (United Nations, 2019).

Within the inter-institutional task team, leadership in technical validation should normally rest with the national statistical office or other official statistical authority. Statistical offices are best positioned to assess coherence, metadata, comparability, and technical defensibility. However, this technical leadership should be exercised in conjunction with the anti-corruption body or relevant public integrity institution, whose role is essential for understanding the legal, institutional, and substantive meaning of the indicators. Other participating institutions, particularly those that own or produce the relevant data, should contribute source-specific knowledge on how records are generated, how definitions are applied, what coverage limitations exist, and what operational practices may affect interpretation. Validation is therefore strongest when the statistical office leads the technical assessment while the anti-corruption body and relevant data-owning institutions contribute the substantive and operational knowledge needed to interpret the source correctly (United Nations, 2019).

Validation can also reveal gaps in registration practices, weaknesses in metadata, inconsistencies across agencies, and practical obstacles to future comparability. In that sense, validation is not only a filter. It is also a mechanism for improving the statistical system over time and for helping institutions understand what must change if stronger indicators are to be produced in later cycles.

A practical example from Kenya illustrates this point. During implementation, the initial set of indicators was progressively narrowed as source availability, metadata, and institutional responsibilities were reviewed. This helped distinguish indicators that could move toward production from those that required additional clarification or source development before validation could be completed.

This step may proceed differently across contexts. In countries with stronger administrative systems, validation may focus more on consistency, linkage, and metadata harmonization. In lower-capacity or fragmented settings, validation may need to begin with more basic issues, such as whether the source is sufficiently stable, whether the variables are clearly understood, whether time coverage is usable, and whether institutions can document the source in a minimum way. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, validation may also need to pay closer attention to safety, partial coverage, reporting bias, institutional discontinuity, and the risk of overinterpreting weak signals (United Nations, 2019).

The following sections describe the main components of data validation in practical terms: clarifying what validation is and is not, reviewing completeness and internal consistency, checking classifications and comparability, assessing denominators and rates, and reaching a documented decision on

whether the indicator is ready for immediate use, usable with caveats, not yet ready, or should be replaced (United Nations, 2019).

Box 3. A good first-cycle source is not always the most complete source

Countries often begin with data sources that are feasible rather than comprehensive. That is not a weakness. It is part of realistic sequencing.

A data source may be suitable for a first cycle if:

- it is already maintained by a recognized institution;
- its scope and limits are reasonably well understood;
- it can be documented with basic metadata*;
- it supports at least one policy-relevant question;
- and it can be produced again with some regularity.

A source may be less suitable for immediate use if:

- its legal status is unclear, or the data are very sensitive;
- access depends on unresolved negotiations;
- definitions vary substantially across institutions;
- coverage is highly partial or unstable;
- or the data exist but cannot yet be validated responsibly.

The best starting point is usually not the most ambitious source, but the source that allows the country to begin credibly and build from there.

* Metadata is information that describes a data source and helps users understand its content and use, such as definitions of variables, classifications, coverage, reference periods, source institution, collection or registration methods, and known limitations.

2.3.1 Ensure completeness, internal consistency, and documentation

One of the first goals of validation is to assess whether the source is complete enough for the intended use. In quality frameworks for official statistics, completeness is understood in practical terms: whether the data required for the intended use are present with sufficient coverage, whether important values are systematically missing, and whether the source omits relevant parts of the target population or process in ways that materially affect interpretation (United Nations, 2019; Iwig et al., 2013).

This includes asking:

1. whether the relevant variables are systematically filled;
2. whether records are missing in patterns that affect interpretation;
3. whether duplicates exist;
4. whether time coverage is continuous enough;
5. whether geographic or institutional coverage is partial;
6. and whether important subgroups are excluded or weakly represented.

Internal consistency is equally important. In official statistical quality frameworks, consistency and coherence refer to whether data are logically connected within the source, over time, and, where relevant, across sources. At the source level, internal consistency means that variables should relate to one another in ways that make sense within the logic of the record system. Dates should follow plausible sequences, case statuses should correspond to procedural stages, totals should be reconcilable, and categories should be used consistently. When inconsistencies appear, they do not

automatically invalidate the source, but they do need to be understood and documented (United Nations, 2019; Brackstone, 1999).

Where substantial inconsistencies exist across institutions or decentralized units, validation should assess whether they can be reconciled through common definitions, coding rules, reference periods, or other documented adjustments. If the differences cannot be reconciled reliably, the data should not be forced into a single consolidated indicator. Depending on the context, results may need to be presented separately, aggregated only at a level at which they remain comparable, or deferred until greater harmonization is possible. In all cases, the nature of the inconsistency and its implications for interpretation should be documented clearly.

Documentation is what allows these limitations to be used responsibly rather than ignored. A source with some missingness or inconsistency may still be usable if the limitations are transparent and stable enough to interpret cautiously. By contrast, a source that is poorly documented may be risky even when it looks complete on the surface. For that reason, metadata, variable descriptions, coding rules, and known institutional practices should be gathered as part of validation, not as an afterthought (United Nations, 2019; Iwig et al., 2013).

2.3.2 Source readiness and validation outcomes

Validation should support a documented decision about whether a source and the corresponding indicator are sufficiently fit for their intended use. Countries may express this decision in different ways depending on their established statistical practices and quality assurance procedures. For practical purposes, one possible approach is to distinguish among outcomes such as the following:

Ready for immediate use
The source is sufficiently documented, coherent, and interpretable to support the intended indicator in the current cycle.

Usable with caveats
The source can support the indicator, but only if limitations are clearly stated. This may apply where coverage is partial, definitions are approximate, or comparability is limited.

Not yet ready
The source exists but should not yet be used for indicator production. This may be due to weak documentation, unresolved legal constraints, unstable classifications, insufficient completeness, or other risks that would make the indicator misleading.

Alternative source or indicator may be needed
The available source does not currently support the intended indicator under sufficiently reliable statistical conditions. Depending on the circumstances, the country may consider improving the source, using a different source, selecting a more appropriate proxy, or choosing another indicator for the current production cycle.

These categories are illustrative and are not intended to replace national statistical quality assurance or validation procedures.

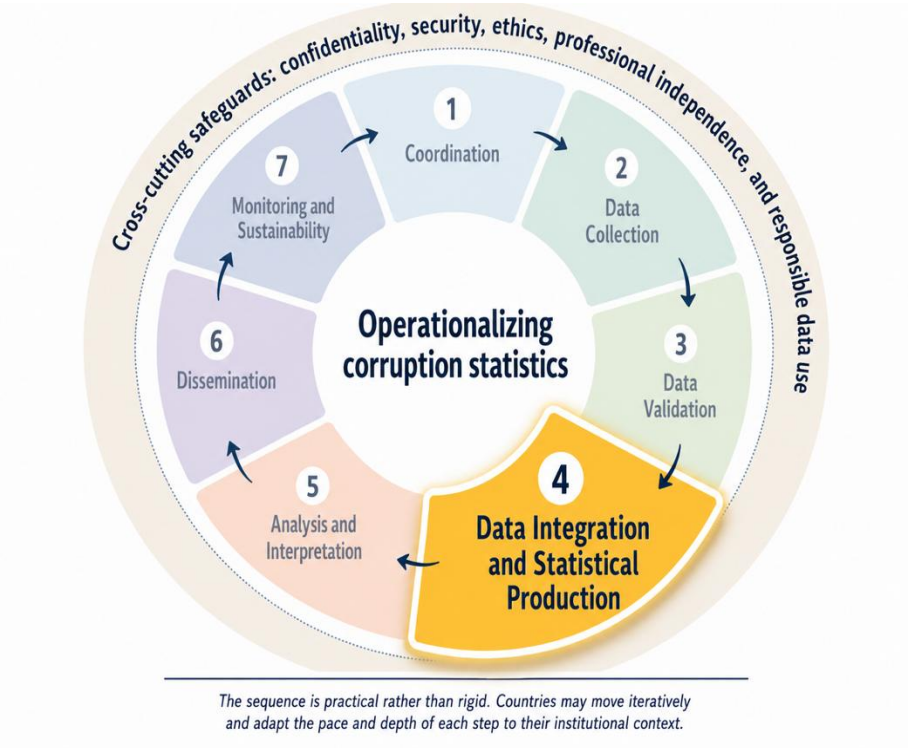
This kind of classification helps countries move forward without assuming that every source has the same degree of maturity. It also helps the national statistical office and other participating institutions prioritize which improvements matter most if a source is not yet ready.

The national statistical office should normally lead this decision process from the technical side, while the anti-corruption bodies contribute the substantive judgment needed to decide whether the indicator still captures a meaningful policy concern or should be replaced (United Nations, 2019).

To support this step, the Guide includes Appendix 4: Source Validation and Decision Sheet, an optional tool that can help countries document source characteristics, validation criteria, and the basis for their final decision.

2.4 Step 4: Data Integration and Statistical Production

Figure 6. Step 4 in the practical sequence: Data Integration and Statistical Production



Roles in this step: The national statistical office should normally lead the technical integration and production of the indicators, working with the anti-corruption body and other participating institutions to clarify source linkages, responsibilities, documentation, and production arrangements.

Data integration and statistical production constitute the stage in which the institutions involved in the task team, especially the national statistical office, consolidate the production of corruption-related indicators from the validated sources identified in the previous steps.

This is an important transition in the overall production cycle. By this point, priority areas have been selected, relevant sources have been identified, and the selected sources have already undergone technical validation. The task at this stage is therefore not simply to explore possible linkages, but to organize how validated information will be brought together and turned into regular statistical outputs.

At the same time, this is also the point at which the process begins to be formalized and made sustainable, so that the production and use of anti-corruption statistics can move from an initial exercise toward a more stable institutional routine.

The ongoing experience in Colombia illustrates the importance of documenting this transition carefully. As implementation has advanced, the work has moved toward consolidating the information generated during the earlier stages into a final implementation report, including the sources, institutional responsibilities, methodological decisions, and remaining limitations identified throughout the process.

This documentation provides an important basis for the subsequent analysis and interpretation of the resulting evidence, while allowing unresolved issues to remain explicit rather than treating the production process as already complete.

The inter-institutional coordination remains important at this stage, as corruption-related statistics are rarely produced by one institution alone and production depends on sustained institutional cooperation. Many indicators depend on information distributed across agencies with different mandates, legal regimes, classifications, and operational routines. Because the participating institutions have already been involved in priority-setting, source identification, and validation, they are usually well placed to determine which sources can be linked, which should remain separate, what caveats apply, and what level of coordination is necessary for actual production. In practice, this arrangement helps move the process from validated inputs to a consolidated production arrangement.

A technical team may be able to merge or align files, but the resulting production system will be weak if the institutions involved have not clarified what the variables mean, what access is permitted, which identifiers can be used, who is responsible for each stage of production, and where the main breaks in comparability lie.

In practical terms, the task team can help:

- identify which sources can realistically be combined;
- clarify whether linkage should occur at record level, aggregate level, or only analytically;
- determine which institution holds the authoritative version of key variables;
- identify where identifiers or common reference structures exist;
- explain institutional differences in categories, timing, or case flow;
- decide whether integration strengthens the indicator or introduces too much distortion;
- agree on which institution will lead regular production, documentation, and updating;
- and formalize documentation, protocols, or agreements needed to sustain the process over time.

Working with data from different institutions is especially useful because integration often reveals issues that did not appear clearly during data collection or validation. Two sources may each be valid on their own and still be difficult to integrate because they use different time references, legal categories, territorial units, or administrative thresholds. These problems are rarely solved through technical work alone. They require cross-institutional interpretation and agreement.

The national statistical office should normally play the leading technical role in this step, particularly where integration involves harmonization, statistical documentation, or the design of a common production structure. At the same time, anti-corruption bodies and source institutions remain essential because they understand the institutional meaning of the data and can help avoid inappropriate equivalences across systems.

In practical terms, participating institutions can help determine which sources can realistically be combined, clarify the appropriate level of linkage, identify authoritative variables and common reference structures, explain differences in classifications or case flows, and agree on responsibilities for regular production and documentation. The national statistical office should normally lead the technical aspects of this work, while the anti-corruption body and source institutions contribute the institutional and substantive knowledge needed to avoid inappropriate equivalences across systems.

A central point of this Guide is that integration and production should remain proportionate to actual capacity. Countries do not need to begin with a fully integrated national corruption data platform. In most settings, that would be unrealistic. A credible first cycle may rely on simpler forms of integration and production, such as harmonizing definitions across institutions, aligning time references, compiling indicators from separate validated sources in a coordinated format, or establishing a regular production

routine led by the statistical authority. More advanced linkage can come later, once legal, organizational, semantic, and technical conditions are clearer.

This step also looks different across contexts. In settings with stronger statistical systems, clearer data governance, and more mature digital infrastructure, integration may involve interoperable systems, structured record linkage, or coordinated statistical platforms. In lower-capacity or fragmented settings, integration and production may need to begin with simpler arrangements such as shared metadata, cross-institutional mapping of equivalent variables, harmonized tabulations, or coordinated production from separate institutional records. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, selective integration with strong safeguards may be preferable to ambitious but weak linkage.

The following sections explain the main components of this stage in practical terms: what integration and production mean in this Guide, why they matter for corruption statistics, how inter-institutional coordination supports the process, how interoperability should be understood, what limits identifiers and comparability impose, what levels of integration are realistic, and how countries can document and formalize the resulting production process.

2.4.1 What do data integration and production mean

In this Guide, data integration and production refer to the process of bringing together information from one or more validated sources in order to produce coherent corruption-related statistics on a regular basis. This may involve linking records, aligning classifications, reconciling counts, assembling a common dataset, producing a survey or generating outputs from survey data, or combining separate statistical outputs into a coordinated production structure.

This broader understanding is important because do not all indicators require the same production architecture. Some depend on data from several institutions and may require record linkage or the harmonization of classifications across sources. Others can be produced reliably by a single institution using one validated source. In those cases, the main task is to establish a regular, well-documented production process that responds to the needs of the anti-corruption body and other users.

Integration should therefore be understood proportionately. Depending on the indicator and the available data, it may involve linking records, harmonizing data across institutions, coordinating the compilation of separate outputs, or maintaining a stable production process for a validated source. What matters is that the chosen approach strengthens coherence, usability, and continuity.

This broader understanding is especially useful because countries differ widely in their institutional and technical conditions. Some will be able to support individual-level or case-level linkage. Others will be limited to aggregate alignment or sequential comparison of outputs. Both can be legitimate forms of integration and production, provided the method is transparent and appropriate to the indicator.

This distinction is particularly important in corruption measurement because many indicators combine institutional response, procedural progression, and enabling conditions that are recorded by different institutions. Without an appropriate form of integration, countries may produce fragmented statistics that are valid in isolation but difficult to interpret together. At the same time, weak integration can be more misleading than no integration. The standard should therefore be responsible coherence and sustainable production, not maximum complexity.

2.4.2 Why integration and production matter for corruption statistics

Integration matters because corruption is rarely visible through one source alone. A complaint registry may show allegations, but not case progression. A prosecution system may show legal action, but not reporting patterns. A procurement database may show publication practices, but not audit follow-up. A survey may capture bribery experiences, but not institutional response. When these sources remain isolated, it becomes harder to understand how different parts of the corruption problem relate to one another.

This is relevant across all three dimensions of the Statistical Framework. For criminal offenses, integration may help connect reporting, investigation, prosecution, adjudication, sanctions, and asset recovery. For preventive measures, it may help relate procurement records, declaration systems, audits, compliance mechanisms, and administrative controls. For the enabling environment, it may help link reporting systems, protection mechanisms and institutional resources.

At the same time, this stage is not only about improving coherence. It is also the stage at which the production of the indicators begins to stabilize, formalize, and become sustainable. Once the sources have been validated and the integration pathway has been defined, countries can begin moving from one-off exercises toward regular production and use. In that sense, this stage is where corruption measurement starts to become part of an institutional routine rather than a purely exploratory exercise.

Integration can also improve practical use. Institutions often need to know not only what happened in one administrative system, but how that pattern fits into a broader process. For example, the number of reported cases may be less informative without knowing how many progressed to prosecution or what institutional pathway followed. Likewise, procurement transparency indicators may be more useful when read together with audit findings, sanctions, or complaint mechanisms.

Integration should not be confused with causal explanation. Even when several sources are combined, the resulting statistics may still be descriptive rather than causal. Integration and production help countries produce more coherent evidence. They do not automatically resolve all interpretive uncertainty.

2.4.3 Legal, organizational, semantic, and technical interoperability

For practical purposes, this Guide distinguishes four interrelated dimensions that institutions may need to consider: legal, organizational, semantic, and technical interoperability.

As discussed in “Clarify Data-Sharing and Legal Arrangements,” the legal basis for data access and sharing should be clarified before statistical production begins. At the integration stage, the relevant question is whether those arrangements are sufficient for the specific type of linkage or joint production being considered, including any applicable confidentiality and data protection requirements. Where they are not, integration should remain at a level that is legally permissible.

Organizational interoperability refers to whether the institutions involved can actually work together. This includes practical coordination arrangements, agreed responsibilities, focal points, working routines, timelines, and trust. Even when legal permission exists, integration and production may fail if institutions do not have a workable organizational arrangement for sustained collaboration.

Semantic interoperability refers to whether institutions mean the same thing when they use similar terms or categories. Two institutions may both use labels such as “complaint,” “case,” “investigation,” “sanction,” or “public official,” but define them differently in practice. Integration becomes fragile when categories appear similar but carry different meanings. For that reason, semantic alignment is often one of the most important and least visible parts of production.

Technical interoperability refers to whether the systems involved can exchange or align information in a usable way. This may depend on file formats, identifiers, coding structures, metadata, digital

systems, or the existence of shared reference standards. Technical interoperability makes the exchange or alignment of information operational in practice. Its usefulness, however, depends on the legal, organizational, and semantic conditions described above being sufficiently clear. Software compatibility forms part of the technical dimension, but technical solutions can only function effectively when the relevant legal permissions, institutional arrangements, and meanings of the data are sufficiently clear.

These four dimensions help explain why integration often takes time. The purpose of identifying them is not to complicate the process, but to make clear that production depends on matching conditions across institutions, not only on the existence of datasets.

In practice, countries often make the greatest progress through modest but concrete integration decisions: common reference tables for agencies or sectors, shared territorial codes or identifiers, agreed data dictionaries, documentation agreements or production protocols, routine transfers, and clearly assigned institutional responsibilities.

2.4.4 Identifiers, linkage, and limits to comparability

Some forms of integration require linking records across sources. This may be relatively simple where institutions use common identifiers, standardized case numbers, shared territorial codes, or stable institutional classifications. In other settings, linkage may be limited or unreliable because those conditions do not exist.

Identifiers matter because they make it possible to determine whether records refer to the same case, institution, procedure, or event. Where they are missing, incomplete, or inconsistently applied, institutions may not be able to link data safely or accurately. This is not only a technical inconvenience. It affects comparability and may limit what kind of indicator can be produced at all.

The institutions involved should therefore ask:

- Do common identifiers exist across the sources to be integrated?
- Are they stable and consistently recorded?
- Can they be used lawfully for statistical purposes?
- Are the reference units the same across institutions?
- Are time periods aligned well enough for linkage to make sense?
- Are there adequate technological and legal safeguards to allow sharing and prevent leaks, misuse, or unauthorized disclosure of the information?

Where the answer to these questions is weak or uncertain, integration may need to remain at a more aggregate or interpretive level. That is a valid outcome. It is better to acknowledge that comparability is limited than to create indicators that imply a level of precision the systems do not support.

This issue is especially relevant in corruption-related statistics because indicators may depend on crossing information from oversight bodies, statistical offices, judicial institutions, procurement systems, or audit authorities that were never designed to operate together.

2.4.5 Levels of integration and production: from simple coordination to systematic output

Not all countries need the same degree of integration in the first cycle. A useful way to think about this stage is to distinguish among levels of complexity.

Level 1: Coordinated use of separate sources

Institutions keep their sources separate, but the task team helps ensure that aggregated outputs are documented, aligned in time, and interpreted together.

Level 2: Harmonized tabulation and shared statistical structure

Institutions still hold separate records, but they use aligned concepts, reference periods, and output formats so that indicators can be compiled and produced more consistently.

Level 3: Partial integration across selected sources

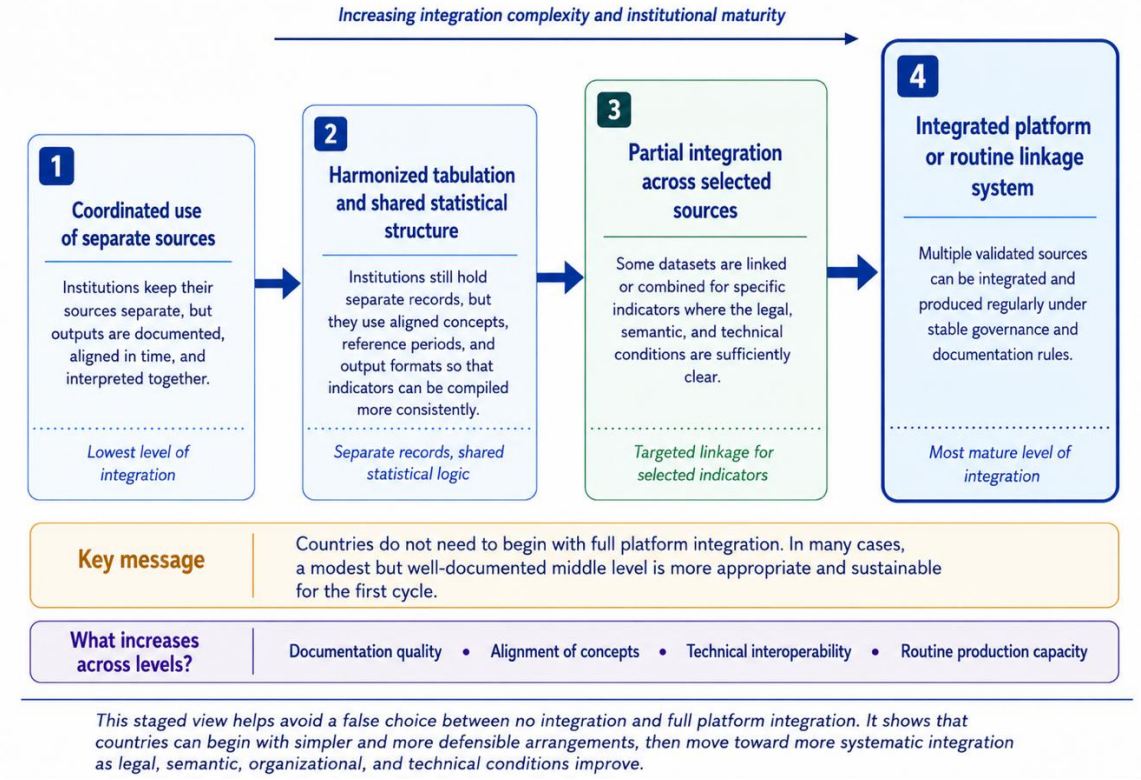
Some datasets are linked or combined for specific indicators where the legal, semantic, and technical conditions are sufficiently clear.

Level 4: Integrated platform or routine linkage system

Institutions operate more mature systems in which multiple validated sources can be integrated and produced regularly under stable governance and documentation rules.

It is also important to take privacy and confidentiality considerations into account, in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Data should, to the extent possible, be shared at the aggregated level. Accordingly, countries should not interpret these levels as progression that must culminate in full integration. A lower level of integration may remain the most appropriate arrangement where it sufficiently meets the statistical purpose or where legal, privacy, or confidentiality considerations limit further linkage.

Figure 7. Levels of integration and production for corruption statistics



This staged view is useful because it helps avoid a false choice between “no integration” and “full platform integration.” In many cases, the most appropriate first step is somewhere in the middle. A modest but well-documented level of integration and production is often preferable to a more ambitious arrangement that cannot be sustained.

2.4.6 Integration decisions, production agreements, and practical outcomes

Like validation, integration should lead to an explicit decision. The institutions involved should be able to say, for each selected indicator or group of indicators, what kind of integration is feasible and defensible in the current cycle, who will produce the indicator, how often it will be updated, and under what documentation rules it will become part of regular output.

Typical outcomes may include:

- proceed with integration and production as planned;
- proceed with a simpler form of integration, such as harmonized outputs rather than record linkage;
- proceed with integration and production but with caveats, where comparability or alignment is limited;
- postpone integration to a later cycle, where the legal, semantic, or technical conditions are not (yet) sufficient;
- or use parallel validated sources without direct integration, where reading them together is more defensible than combining them.

These decisions should be documented clearly. Integration that is not documented becomes difficult to reproduce, explain, or defend. For that reason, institutions should record not only what was integrated, but also what was not integrated and why.

At the end of a successful first cycle, countries may also benefit from a more formal closure document that consolidates the production arrangement. This can take different forms depending on the national context:

- an inter-institutional memorandum of understanding;
- a statistical production protocol;
- a joint technical note on corruption-related statistical production;
- an internal resolution of the national statistical office;
- or a formal decision or resolution adopted through an existing statistical commission or inter-agency committee.

The purpose of such a document is to certify that the indicator or set of indicators has moved from exploratory coordination into a recognized production routine. A good closure document would normally identify:

- the indicators to be produced;
- the institutions responsible;
- the sources used;
- the update frequency;
- the documentation and metadata requirements;
- the confidentiality and dissemination rules;
- and the institutional mechanism for future revision or expansion.

This kind of agreement is especially useful because it helps solidify the transition from project-based work to regular statistical production. It also provides continuity when staff rotates or when future revisions of the system are needed.

2.4.7 Data integration and production in fragile and lower-capacity settings

In fragile and lower-capacity settings, integration often needs to begin with simpler and safer forms. Institutions may be fragmented, digital systems uneven, identifiers weak, and legal conditions uncertain. In such settings, countries should be especially cautious about attempting advanced linkage too early. The same may apply to countries with very high data protection and privacy standards that may not allow for full or even partial data integration.

A more appropriate first step may be:

- aligning terminology across institutions;
- harmonizing reference periods;
- documenting where the same concept is recorded differently;
- coordinating separate outputs through the agreed task team;
- establishing a small number of validated indicators under one lead institution;
- or using validated sources side by side without merging them.

This should not be seen as a weak form of integration. In many contexts, it is the most defensible one. The purpose is to build coherence gradually while navigating data privacy issues and avoiding artificial precision, unsafe linkage, or unmanageable technical burdens.

In fragile and conflict-affected settings, integration may also raise stronger concerns about confidentiality, safety, and political sensitivity. The question is not only whether the data can be linked, but whether they should be linked in the current context and whether the resulting output would be safe, stable, and interpretable.

Box 4. Interoperability is more than a technical issue

When institutions hear the word “interoperability,” they often think first of software or databases. In practice, integration and production depend on four connected conditions:

- Legal: Are the data allowed to be used for this purpose?
- Organizational: Are the institutions actually able to work together?
- Semantic: Do they mean the same thing when they use the same terms?
- Technical: Can the systems exchange or align data in a usable format?

If one of these conditions is missing, integration may remain weak even if the technical systems look advanced.

Box 5. A good integration and production strategy does not start with full linkage

Countries do not need to begin by merging everything. A credible first cycle may start with:

- harmonized definitions,
- aligned time periods,
- coordinated tabulations,
- stable production under one lead institution,
- and documented comparison across validated sources.

More advanced linkage should come only when the legal, organizational, semantic, and technical conditions are clear enough to support it responsibly. The goal of integration is not complexity. The goal is coherent and sustainable production.

2.5 Step 5: Analysis and interpretation

Figure 8. Step 5 in the practical sequence: Analysis and Interpretation



Roles in this step: The national statistical office should normally lead the statistical interpretation of the indicators, while the anti-corruption body and other relevant institutions contribute to the legal, institutional, and policy context needed to understand what the indicators can and cannot show.

Analysis and interpretation constitute the stage in which validated indicators begin to acquire statistical meaning. By this point, priority areas have been selected, sources have been identified, their technical quality has been reviewed, and the relevant production process has already been organized. The task now is to examine what the resulting indicators can objectively say, what they cannot say, and how they should be read in light of their scope, limits, and institutional context.

This step is essential because the same indicator can support different readings depending on how it is defined, the denominator used, the reporting environment, and the institutional process that generates the underlying data. For example, an increase in reported complaints may reflect a higher incidence of corruption, improved access to reporting channels, greater trust in institutions, changes in recording practices, or a combination of these factors. Analysis should therefore examine the indicator together with relevant related indicators and available contextual information, identify the interpretations that are supported by the evidence, and state clearly what cannot be concluded from the available data. The sections that follow provide practical guidance for carrying out this process. They are not intended to replace more detailed indicator-specific methodological guidance, which can be further developed as countries gain experience with implementation.

The interpretation proposed in this Guide is intentionally aligned with the role of official statistics as described in the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and in international quality frameworks for statistical production. Official statistics are expected to be relevant, impartial, professionally

independent, and transparent about methods and limitations. For that reason, the interpretation of corruption-related indicators should remain as close as possible to the statistical meaning of the indicator itself. The aim is not to arrive directly at policy prescriptions or broad political conclusions, but to clarify what the indicator describes, what question it can illuminate, and what uncertainty or caveats accompany it.

The Guide therefore favors descriptive, technically grounded interpretation over policy advocacy. This does not mean that the indicators are irrelevant to public policy. Rather, the roles should be clearly distinguished. The national statistical office should normally lead the statistical interpretation of the indicators, ensuring that conclusions remain consistent with the definitions, methods, sources, and limitations of the data. Through the task team, anti-corruption bodies and other participating institutions can contribute to the legal, institutional, and operational context needed to understand the results. Once statistical interpretation has been established, the anti-corruption body and other relevant policy actors are better placed to assess the implications for anti-corruption policy, implementation, or follow-up. This sequence allows the indicators to inform policy while maintaining a clear distinction between statistical interpretation and policy prescription.

The inter-institutional task team remains important in this step because interpretation requires more than technical production. The statistical office can lead the methodological assessment of the indicators, clarify what the figures represent, and ensure consistency with the underlying sources. The anti-corruption body and other participating institutions contribute knowledge about legal procedures, institutional pathways, and implementation context. Together, they can help prevent both underinterpretation and overinterpretation. However, the statistical office should safeguard the boundary between statistical interpretation and policy prescription, in line with the professional independence expected of official statistics. Subsequently, interpretation of anti-corruption policy implications should normally be carried forward by anti-corruption agencies and other actors in the anti-corruption system.

This step also looks different across contexts. In countries with stronger statistical systems and more stable time series, interpretation may draw more confidently on trends and repeated outputs. In lower-capacity or more fragmented settings, interpretation may need to remain narrower and more cautious, especially where indicators are newly produced, coverage is partial, or reporting conditions remain uneven. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, interpretation may need to pay even closer attention to institutional discontinuity, underreporting, uneven territorial visibility, and safety-related distortions.

The following sections explain the main components of analysis and interpretation in practical terms: what interpretation means in this Guide, how to move from indicators to questions without slipping into policy analysis, how to read patterns without overstating them, how to treat denominators, trends, case attrition, and legal heterogeneity, and how to document caveats and analytic limits in a way that remains statistically rigorous and institutionally useful.

2.5.1 What analysis and interpretation mean in this Guide

In this Guide, analysis and interpretation refer to the process of reading validated indicators in a way that is statistically grounded, substantively meaningful, and transparent about limits. This includes identifying what the indicator captures, what part of the corruption problem it reflects, how it changes over time or across institutional settings, and what cautions should accompany its use.

Interpretation is not the same as advocacy, ranking, or causal explanation. An indicator may be highly relevant and still support only a limited descriptive conclusion. Where possible, an indicator should therefore be interpreted alongside other relevant indicators that capture related dimensions or stages of the same process. For instance, trends in complaints may be read

together with indicators on investigations, prosecutions, convictions, or survey-based experiences of corruption, where these are available and sufficiently comparable. Looking across related indicators can help narrow the range of plausible interpretations, although it does not by itself establish causality.

Interpretation should also not be reduced to mechanical commentary. The goal is not simply to restate the number in words, but to ask what kind of statistical question the indicator can reasonably inform. Some indicators are more useful for monitoring institutional response. Others are more useful for describing preventive controls, reporting conditions, or procedural bottlenecks. A good interpretation process links the indicator back to the question that motivated its production in the first place but remains disciplined enough not to turn that step into a policy recommendation. Thus, the indicator should be accompanied by metadata that provides this information.

For that reason, interpretation in this Guide is best understood as a structured conversation between the evidence produced and the statistical question that the evidence can support. It depends on data, but it also depends on context. What it should not do is replace the separate work of policy design or political judgment, which belong to later stages and to other institutional actors (United Nations, 2014, 2019).

2.5.2 From indicators to statistically defensible questions

The most useful way to begin interpretation is not by asking what policy conclusion should be drawn immediately, but by asking what question the indicator is statistically able to illuminate. This keeps the analysis grounded and reduces the risk of overclaiming. Some indicators are best suited to questions such as:

- Are reports reaching the institutions expected to receive them?
- Are cases progressing through the system or getting stalled?
- Are preventive mechanisms being implemented as intended?
- Are there observable changes in access to information, transparency, or reporting channels?
- Are some territories, sectors, or institutional pathways showing persistent bottlenecks?
- Are there signs that public trust, reporting confidence, or institutional use is changing over time?

This kind of questioning helps align interpretation with the logic of the indicator. An indicator constructed from prosecution records, for example, should not automatically be treated as a direct measure of corruption prevalence. Likewise, an indicator based on perception data should not be read as if it were a count of observed corruption events.

Inter-institutional coordination is helpful here because it can connect the indicator to the institutional process it reflects. The statistical office can clarify the statistical logic of the measure, while the anti-corruption body and source institutions can explain how the process works in practice and where interpretation should remain cautious.

2.5.3 Trends, comparisons, and the importance of reference points

Indicators are often more interpretable when they are read against a reference point. A single figure in one year will say less than a series over time, a comparison across similar units, or a contrast between different stages of an institutional process.

Trend analysis is especially useful because it helps avoid reading one year in isolation. A single observation may reflect temporary shocks, administrative changes, unusual events, or registration effects. A series provides a better basis for asking whether a pattern is stable, changing, or volatile. For that reason, countries should avoid overinterpreting single-year outputs where no comparative reference exists. First-year outputs can form a baseline for multi-year analysis.

Comparisons can also be useful, but only when the underlying conditions are sufficiently aligned. Territorial comparisons, institutional comparisons, or time comparisons are informative only if the concepts, coverage, and production routines are comparable enough to support them. If institutional definitions changed, if reporting access expanded, or if procedural rules shifted, those breaks should be made visible in the interpretation. This is consistent with international quality frameworks, which treat coherence and comparability as central requirements for official statistics rather than as optional additions (United Nations, 2019; European Commission, 2017).

This is one reason why interpretation depends on the earlier stages of validation and integration. Trends and comparisons are easiest to interpret when the underlying production process is stable and well documented, but gradual improvements in the measurement system do not preclude comparisons over time. Where definitions, coverage, sources, or production arrangements change between cycles, those changes should be documented and considered when interpreting the trend. In some cases, comparisons may remain possible with appropriate qualifications; in others, a methodological break may need to be identified explicitly.

2.5.4 Denominators, rates, and what the indicator is actually saying

Interpretation depends heavily on the structure of the indicator, especially on the relationship between numerator and denominator. The same count can support very different conclusions depending on what is divided by and why.

For example:

- a number of convictions per 100,000 population speaks to one kind of question;
- a number of convictions per reported case speaks to another;
- and a number of reports received through a reporting channel speaks to yet another.

These are not interchangeable. Each produces a different analytic meaning. The interpretation must therefore ask not only what the numerator represents, but also whether the denominator fits the statistical or institutional question that motivated the indicator.

This is particularly important because changing the denominator can change the apparent meaning of the trend without any change in the underlying phenomenon. An increase in the rate may reflect a change in reporting practices, access to institutions, the volume of cases entering the system, or the definition of the reference population. Interpretation should make these possibilities visible.

Good interpretation depends on staying close to the structure of the measure rather than assuming that all rates speak in the same way.

2.5.5 Institutional and legal heterogeneity, practice, and comparability limits

Corruption-related indicators often depend on categories that are shaped by law and institutional practice. This creates an important interpretive challenge: the same term may not be defined the same way across institutions, territories, or countries.

A corruption-related offence may be defined differently across legal systems. Thresholds for opening cases, disciplinary practices, evidentiary standards, plea arrangements, administrative sanctions, or reporting procedures may also vary. In some contexts, two institutions may use the same term but apply it in different ways. In others, legal reforms, institutional practice or administrative changes may alter what enters the record over time.

Where these differences exist, indicators may not be directly comparable across institutions, territories, countries, or overtime. For example, a higher number of recorded corruption offences may reflect a broader legal definition, a lower threshold for opening a case, or a change in recording practices rather than a higher level of corruption.

The point is not to abandon the indicators. It is to interpret them in a way that recognizes the heterogeneity of the field. Where differences in definitions are substantial, the interpretation should say so explicitly. In some cases, narrower within-system interpretation may be more defensible than broader comparison across systems. This is one reason why anti-corruption bodies, judicial actors, and other source institutions remain important in the interpretation stage. Their contribution helps ensure that statistical outputs are not read as if the categories were universally equivalent when they are not.

2.5.6 Attrition, bottlenecks, and institutional pathways

Some of the most useful corruption-related indicators do not describe incidence directly, but progression through an institutional pathway. Complaints may enter one system, move into investigation, proceed to prosecution, and only later reach adjudication, sanction, or asset recovery. At each stage, cases may narrow, stall, or disappear.

This is where concepts such as case attrition become important. Attrition refers to the reduction or filtering of cases as they move through an institutional process. Attrition in itself is neutral. Overall, reduction is normal because cases may be dismissed, reclassified, consolidated, or resolved in different ways. It can very much be a sign of a healthy justice system and general rule of law. However, very high attrition, long delays, or repeated bottlenecks may raise important questions about institutional functioning, evidentiary standards, procedural design, or access to justice. Academic and criminal justice research has long used attrition to examine how cases drop out as they move across institutional stages, precisely because the progression itself can reveal bottlenecks or filtering mechanisms that are not visible in isolated counts (Chopin & Aebi, 2020; Kelly et al., 2005).

Interpretation should therefore ask:

1. At what stage do cases drop most sharply?
2. Is the reduction expected or unusually high?
3. Does the pattern reflect lack of resources, legal filtering, procedural delay, weak evidence, or something else?
4. Is the bottleneck stable over time?

5. Does the bottleneck vary across regions, or does it remain similar across them?
6. Does the same bottleneck also appear in comparable non-corruption cases?

These comparisons can help distinguish between system-wide and more localized patterns. Similar bottlenecks across regions or across different types of cases may point to broader procedural or resource constraints, while patterns concentrated in particular regions, authorities or types of offences may warrant closer examination of local institutional practices or corruption-related risks. Neither pattern should be treated as conclusive on its own.

Indicators that reveal attrition are particularly useful because they help shift attention from isolated institutional outputs to the broader functioning of the accountability chain. At the same time, they must be interpreted carefully, since attrition may be shaped by classification rules and procedural thresholds that differ across systems.

This is also another reason why access to justice matters for interpretation. Where reporting, complaint handling, procedural progression, or access to remedies are weak, attrition patterns may reveal not only technical bottlenecks but also deeper limits in how people can enter and move through accountability systems. In these cases, interpretation should make clear that the indicator may be capturing institutional access conditions as much as corruption-related behavior itself.

2.5.7 Analysis in fragile and lower-capacity settings

In fragile and lower-capacity settings, analysis may need to remain more modest, but not less useful. The challenge in these contexts is often not only the weakness of the sources, but the uneven visibility of the phenomenon itself. Records may be incomplete, institutions may be territorially uneven, reporting may be unsafe, and the most visible numbers may reflect only part of the system.

Interpretation in such settings should therefore focus on defensible readings:

- what the indicator clearly captures;
- where its coverage is partial;
- what part of the territory or institutional process it leaves out;
- and what caveats must accompany their use.

A narrower interpretation is not a weak interpretation. In many cases, it is the most responsible one. It is better to say clearly that an indicator reflects a limited but important institutional fragment than to treat it as a complete measure of corruption dynamics.

In these settings, analysis may also depend more on reading several partial indicators together. Administrative outputs, targeted surveys, and complementary evidence may illuminate different parts of the picture. The task is not to force them into one false total, but to use them in a disciplined and transparent way.

2.5.8 Interpretation outputs and analytic documentation

Interpretation should not remain informal or improvised. Once indicators are produced, countries benefit from documenting how they are being read, what caveats apply, and what kinds of statistical questions they are meant to support. This can take different forms:

- short interpretive notes accompanying each indicator;
- a technical annex explaining breaks in series or comparability limits;
- an internal analytical brief for the inter-institutional task team; or

- a more public-facing explanation prepared jointly by the national statistical office, the anti-corruption body, and other participating institutions.

The important point is that interpretation should be documented clearly enough to be reproducible and reviewable. This helps maintain continuity over time and reduces the risk that the same indicator will be read in contradictory ways by different users. It can also add transparency and credibility to the process.

A well-documented interpretation process also supports future revision. Countries may later refine the indicator, improve the data source, change the denominator, or expand territorial coverage. Clear documentation helps ensure that these changes are understood as part of a statistical production process rather than as arbitrary shifts in meaning.

Box 6. Interpretation begins after validation

Validation and interpretation are related, but they are not the same thing.

- Validation asks whether the source and indicator are technically fit for use.
- Interpretation asks what the resulting indicator means once it has entered production.

Keeping this distinction clear helps prevent two common mistakes:

- treating technical validation as if it already answered the substantive question;
- or interpreting an indicator before its technical limits are understood.

A good interpretation process starts from validated indicators and stays explicit about what remains uncertain.

Box 7. A useful interpretation is not always a broad interpretation

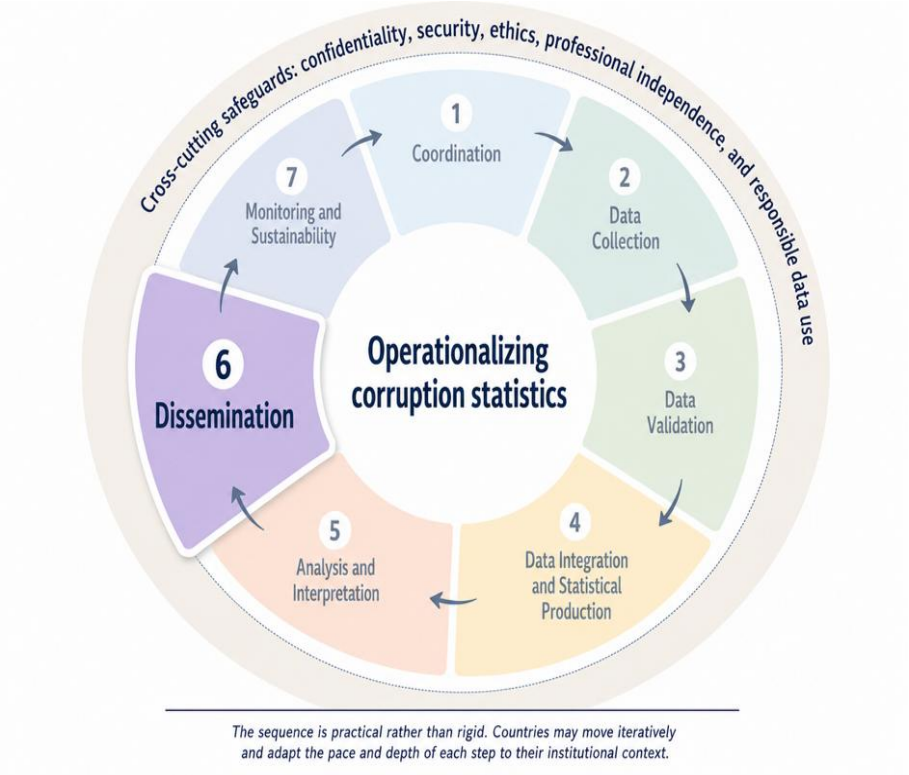
The strongest interpretation is not always the most expansive one. A useful interpretation may simply say:

- what the indicator captures;
- what institutional stage it reflects;
- what caveats apply;
- and what statistical question it can reasonably inform.

That may be more valuable than a broad conclusion that the data cannot actually support. The goal of interpretation is not to make the indicator sound bigger than it is. The goal is to make it more usable, more honest, and more relevant in terms of policy.

2.6 Step 6: Dissemination

Figure 9. Step 6 in the practical sequence: Dissemination



Roles in this step: The anti-corruption body would normally lead the substantive dissemination and institutional uptake of the indicators, while the national statistical office safeguards statistical quality, methodological clarity, and appropriate caveats, with other participating institutions supporting communication and use as relevant.

In this Guide, dissemination refers to the organized release and communication of corruption-related statistical outputs once they have completed the earlier stages of the production cycle. The task now is to communicate them in a way that preserves their meaning, protects their credibility, and supports their sustained use over time. This may include metadata, tables, indicator sheets, statistical bulletins, dashboards, technical notes, public briefs, or institutional reports.

Dissemination is not a purely communicative step. It is part of the production cycle itself, because the way indicators are released affects how they are understood, trusted, reused, and institutionalized. In corruption measurement, this is especially important. These indicators are often politically sensitive, still relatively new within official statistics, and not always normalized in public debate. Poor dissemination can therefore undermine otherwise careful production.

A central principle of this Guide is that dissemination should remain consistent with the statistical nature of the indicators. Outputs should be clear, accessible, and useful, but they should not overstate what the data support. Public release should preserve technical accuracy, document caveats where necessary, and avoid converting the statistical product itself into a vehicle for policy advocacy or political signaling. This distinction is especially important in corruption measurement because the public and institutional demand for conclusions may exceed what the indicators can support. Dissemination should therefore make the statistics usable without overstretching them. This is consistent with the broader logic of official statistics, which emphasizes impartiality, professional independence, methodological transparency, and clarity about

limits (United Nations, 2014, 2019). Of course, policy recommendations may be the main motivation behind measurement exercises. It is thus recommended to base them on the measurement results but keep the two exercises distinct.

At the same time, dissemination should not be treated as an afterthought. If corruption-related statistics are to become part of a sustainable national system, they need to be communicated in formats that are intelligible, institutionally credible, and connected to actual use. In that sense, dissemination is not only about visibility. It is also about institutionalization.

The following sections explain the main components of dissemination in practical terms: who should lead it, how to communicate sensitive indicators responsibly, what formats may be appropriate for different audiences, and how dissemination can support the regular institutional use of corruption-related statistics without compromising their statistical nature.

2.6.1 Institutional leadership in dissemination

Different institutions may contribute to dissemination, but the roles should be clear. The national statistical office should remain central in ensuring that outputs are technically sound, well documented, and statistically neutral. This includes metadata, methodological notes, caveats, revision practices, and consistency across releases.

At the same time, the anti-corruption body is often the most appropriate institution to lead dissemination in operational terms. These indicators often concern sensitive issues that are not yet normalized in public debate and therefore require institutionally informed communication. The anti-corruption body usually has stronger institutional familiarity with integrity systems, implementation pathways, and the practical concerns of the users most likely to rely on these indicators. When dissemination is led only as a technical release without that institutional bridge, the statistics may remain correct but underused. Giving the anti-corruption body a central dissemination role can strengthen the long-term sustainability of the indicators by linking their production to an institution that has a clear substantive interest in maintaining, using, and updating them over time. In many countries, the anti-corruption body is better placed to:

- explain why the indicators matter within the anti-corruption system;
- connect them to existing monitoring and reporting routines;
- support institutional uptake across public entities;
- frame the release in ways that are intelligible to relevant users;
- and help ensure that the indicators become part of an ongoing policy-monitoring infrastructure rather than a one-off statistical exercise.

The inter-institutional task team also remains relevant at this stage because dissemination depends on decisions about timing, format, ownership, caveats, metadata, and intended audiences. In addition, as all relevant institutions have been included throughout the process, buy-in and ownership of the results will likely be greater.

A good practice is therefore shared dissemination with differentiated roles: the national statistical office safeguards statistical integrity; the anti-corruption body leads substantive dissemination and institutional uptake; and the task team helps review language, caveats, and timing before release.

2.6.2 Communicating sensitive indicators responsibly

Corruption-related indicators often concern issues that are politically charged, reputationally sensitive, or easily misunderstood. Dissemination should therefore be designed with particular care. Responsible dissemination usually requires:

- clear explanation of what the indicator captures and what it does not capture;
- visible caveats where coverage, comparability, or interpretation are limited;
- explicit distinction between descriptive findings and broader institutional claims;
- avoidance of sensationalist framing;
- careful handling of disaggregation where confidentiality or reputational harm may arise;
- and consistency between the release language and the technical documentation produced earlier in the cycle.

This is especially important where the indicators relate to complaints, prosecutions, convictions, sanctions, whistleblower mechanisms, or institutional bottlenecks. Numbers in these areas may be read too quickly as evidence of success, failure, deterioration, or improvement when, in fact, they may also reflect changes in reporting, access, institutional activity, legal reform, or classification practices.

Dissemination should therefore aim to reduce misunderstanding, not simply to maximize visibility.

2.6.3 Dissemination formats and audiences

Different audiences require different dissemination formats. A single release format is rarely sufficient. For example:

- technical users may require metadata, methodological notes, classifications, and caveats;
- institutional users may need short indicator briefs, trend notes, or internal dashboards;
- broader publics may benefit from concise bulletins, simple visualizations, and plain-language explanations;
- civil society and academia may need access to documentation that allows the outputs to be reviewed, contextualized, or used in independent analysis.

For that reason, dissemination should be planned with audiences in mind. The same indicator may be released through more than one format, provided that the underlying statistical meaning remains consistent across outputs.

Interactive tools may also be useful, but only if they do not obscure the limits of the data. Dashboards, portals, and visual interfaces can improve access and visibility of results, making them useful dissemination tools, but they should still make caveats, definitions, and metadata available in a visible and intelligible way.

2.6.4 Dissemination in fragile and lower-capacity settings

In fragile and conflict-affected settings, dissemination may need to be narrower, more selective, and more cautious. Institutional trust may be uneven, available evidence may be particularly constrained or difficult to communicate safely, and some outputs may be politically or operationally sensitive. In such contexts, dissemination should prioritize defensible releases over ambitious communication strategies. This may involve:

- publishing a smaller number of indicators;
- relying more heavily on technical notes and caveats;

- limiting some disaggregation;
- using internal or semi-public dissemination first;
- or sequencing wider release only after institutions have agreed on basic interpretive safeguards.

That should not be treated as a weakness. In many settings, selective dissemination is the most credible way to begin building trust in the indicators and in the institutions that produce them. Since one of the main aims of measurement is to provide an evidence base for anti-corruption policymaking, the institutions across the anti-corruption landscape are among the most important recipients of the results.

2.6.5 Documentation, release protocols, and continuity

Dissemination should be documented as part of the production system. Countries benefit from having a simple release protocol that records:

- which indicators are released;
- by whom;
- to which audiences, including whether dissemination is internal, institutional, or public;
- in what format;
- with what metadata and caveats;
- at what frequency;
- and through which institutional channels.

This is important not only for clarity, but also for continuity. Staff may change, priorities may shift, and future revisions may alter the indicators. A documented dissemination routine helps ensure that releases remain consistent over time and that the statistical meaning of the outputs is preserved even as the system evolves.

Where the production process has matured sufficiently, dissemination can also be anchored in a more formal institutional arrangement, such as a joint release protocol, a technical dissemination note, or a standing communication routine agreed by the statistical office, the anti-corruption body, and the other relevant participating institutions.

Country Focus: How to institutionalize corruption metrics into the public policy process – lessons from Mexico

Mexico provides a useful example of how coordination, statistical autonomy, and inter-institutional arrangements can connect corruption measurement with public policy processes. At the core is the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) constitutional autonomy, both technical and managerial, reinforced by the Statistical Law and the institutional architecture of the Mexican National System of Statistical and Geographical Information. This design secures method choice, release calendars, and professional independence from political cycles; it also formalizes multi-actor coordination through advisory councils, information subsystems, and executive committees (OECD, 2018; IMF, 2021). In practice, this has enabled INEGI to standardize methods, steward cross-government data flows, and publish outputs that are distinguished from policy statements.

On the data production and dissemination side, INEGI has institutionalized periodic surveys with corruption-relevant modules, most notably the *Encuesta Nacional de Calidad e Impacto Gubernamental* (ENCIG), which measures both experience of bribery in public service transactions and perceptions of corruption. Results are disseminated through open microdata, statistical reports, and public releases, making the information available to public institutions, researchers, and other users (INEGI, 2024). This connection to policy was formalized through a 2018 cooperation agreement between INEGI and SESNA, which established a framework for using censuses, surveys, administrative records, and statistical indicators to inform the design of the *Política Nacional*

Anticorrupción and its evaluation scheme (SESNA, 2018). This institutional architecture is complemented by the *Plataforma Digital Nacional* (PDN), administered by SESNA and designed to integrate and interconnect six anti-corruption information systems, including information on assets and interests, public procurement, sanctions, and public complaints. The platform relies on interoperability standards, common data specifications, and digital services such as APIs or web services, with access governed according to the applicable rules and user profiles (SESNA, 2024). The PDN's governance explicitly addresses interoperability, security, and role-based access, while promoting open-source, modular development and nationwide scaling (SESNA, 2024, pp. 3–6).

Mexico's coordination model is underpinned by formal inter-institutional agreements that bridge statistics and policy. An INEGI–SESNA cooperation agreement commits both institutions to leverage censuses, surveys, and administrative records to design and evaluate anti-corruption policy, including the PNA and PDN; it also references the use of ENCIG and ENCRIGE (business-focused survey on regulatory quality and interactions) as methodological anchors for monitoring (SESNA, 2018). Additional collaboration with the federal *Secretaría de la Función Pública* (SFP) has focused on data exchanges relevant to integrity management and sanctions, reinforcing the pipeline from administrative records to official indicators and policy dashboards (SFP, 2019).

What other countries can take away from Mexico's experiences:

- Guarantee independence and clarify roles. A legal framework that protects the NSO's professional autonomy and formalizes a national statistical system with multi-stakeholder bodies helps sustain impartial methods and predictable releases (OECD, 2018; IMF, 2021).
- Institutionalize periodic surveys with open outputs. Regular, methodologically standardized surveys on corruption experience and service quality, with clearly defined coverage, open microdata, and user-friendly reports, make results usable across government and society (INEGI, 2024).
- Use formal agreements to connect statistics to policy. Cooperation agreements between the NSO and anti-corruption authorities can establish a stable framework for using censuses, surveys, administrative records, and indicators in the design and evaluation of anti-corruption policy (SESNA, 2018).
- Build an interoperability backbone. A platform like the PDN, with common data standards, APIs, and security protocols, lets authorities link assets, procurement, and sanctions data for prevention and enforcement, while enabling public transparency (SESNA, 2024, pp. 2–6).
- Maintain a clear distinction between statistical analysis and policy advocacy, while ensuring that indicators remain useful for monitoring and decision-making. Statistical releases should remain methodologically independent, while their potential uses, such as dashboards, briefs, or monitoring indicators, can be discussed with relevant policy actors.

Taken together, Mexico's experience shows how the coordination step of the seven-step process can be institutionalized: independence safeguards credible data; agreements and platforms translate data into policy intelligence; and periodic, open dissemination closes the loop with society. Countries can adapt these elements to their legal and institutional context, starting with a small set of priority indicators and scalable data-sharing agreements.

2.7 Step 7: Monitoring and sustainability

Figure 10. Step 7 in the practical sequence: Monitoring and Sustainability



Roles in this step: The anti-corruption body and the national statistical office should normally share responsibility for monitoring and sustainability, with the anti-corruption body supporting policy use and institutional follow-up, and the national statistical office safeguarding continuity, methodological consistency, and regular statistical production.

Monitoring and sustainability constitute the stage that helps transform a corruption measurement exercise into a recurring part of the national statistical and anti-corruption system. By this point, indicators have already been prioritized, sources identified, data validated, outputs produced and results disseminated. The task is now to ensure that these indicators continue to be produced and used over time, so that countries can track changes in corruption risks and institutional responses and, where the available indicators and evidence permit, assess progress in the implementation and effectiveness of anti-corruption measures.

Sustainability needs more than repeated production. It also requires institutional arrangements and routines that allow the indicators to remain relevant, statistically sound and feasible over successive cycles. This includes periodically reviewing the indicators and their underlying sources, learning from how the resulting statistics are used, and revising, expanding or retiring indicators when priorities, data sources or institutional needs change.

For that reason, monitoring and sustainability should not be understood as a final checkpoint added at the end of the production cycle. It is the stage through which the production cycle becomes recursive. It creates the conditions for regular feedback between institutions, for systematic improvement of the indicators, and for the gradual expansion of the system beyond its initial subset.

A central principle of this Guide is that monitoring and sustainability should remain consistent with the dual or multi-institutional architecture that supports corruption-related statistics. The national statistical office should continue to safeguard methodological quality, documentation, comparability, and revision logic. The

anti-corruption body should continue to assess whether the indicators remain relevant for anti-corruption monitoring, institutional follow-up, and longer-term use. Monitoring and sustainability are therefore strongest when both institutions sustain a structured feedback relationship over time rather than interacting only during the initial design phase.

This stage is also where the task team begins to evolve. In earlier steps, it helps institutions coordinate, validate, integrate, and support interpretation. At this stage, its role should gradually shift from facilitating initial or ad hoc coordination toward helping institutionalize stable communication and production routines that do not depend entirely on a single coordination mechanism. In other words, the aim is to build durable inter-institutional relationships that can continue beyond the initial implementation process.

The following sections explain the main components of monitoring and sustainability in practical terms: what monitoring means in this Guide, why it is essential for institutionalization, how feedback between the anti-corruption body and the statistical office should function, how indicators can be revised over time, and how countries can move from an initial set of indicators toward a more stable and expandable measurement system that can be used to continuously provide information on the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures and create evidence for further policymaking.

2.7.1 What monitoring and sustainability mean in this Guide

In this Guide, monitoring refers to the repeated use of corruption-related indicators to track change over time in the areas they were selected to measure, including corruption risks, institutional responses and, where the evidence permits, progress in the implementation and effectiveness of anti-corruption measures. Sustainability refers to the institutional arrangements and routines that allow those indicators to continue being produced and used over successive cycles. As part of sustaining the system, institutions should periodically review whether the indicators remain statistically sound, relevant and feasible, and whether their underlying sources or methods require adjustment.

This includes questions such as:

- Are the indicators still being produced with adequate consistency?
- Are they still aligned with institutional priorities?
- Are they being used in practice?
- Have the underlying sources changed?
- Do the indicators still capture the phenomenon in the way they were intended to?
- Should the system be expanded, refined, simplified, or partially redesigned?

Periodic review asks whether the measurement system itself is working as intended and whether it should evolve. Dissemination communicates outputs. Interpretation explains what the indicators mean. Monitoring uses the indicators repeatedly to track change over time in the phenomena and institutional responses they were selected to measure.

This step is especially important in corruption measurement because the production system is often relatively young, the indicators may still be consolidating, and institutional practices may change over time. A measurement system that is not periodically reviewed can become outdated, disconnected from use, or too rigid to improve.

2.7.2 Why monitoring and sustainability are essential for institutionalization

The monitoring and sustainability step is where corruption-related statistics begin to function as part of a durable institutional arrangement rather than as a one-time initiative. Institutionalization does not happen simply because indicators are produced once or even because they are disseminated successfully. It

happens when institutions create a regular process for reviewing, updating, and improving the system over time.

This matters for several reasons. First, source systems may change. Administrative categories may be revised, institutional mandates may shift, digital systems may be updated, and reporting patterns may evolve. Second, the uses of the indicators may also change. An indicator that was initially experimental may become central, while another may prove less useful than expected. Third, as countries gain experience, they may become capable of producing additional indicators or more advanced forms of integration than were feasible in the first cycle.

For that reason, monitoring and sustainability should be treated as the mechanism that keeps the system alive. It is what allows the system to respond to change without having to restart the entire process from the beginning.

Box 8. Monitoring and sustainability turn a cycle into a system

A first successful round of indicator production is important, but it is not enough by itself to institutionalize the system. Institutionalization begins when the institutions involved create a recurring process to:

- review the indicators,
- improve them,
- decide what stays,
- decide what changes,
- and expand the system when appropriate.

That is what turns a production cycle into a durable statistical and institutional system.

2.7.3 The evolving role of inter-institutional coordination

Inter-institutional coordination remains relevant at this stage, but the way it is organized should evolve over time. In the earlier phases, countries may rely more heavily on a specific coordination mechanism to bring institutions together. In a more mature system, that dependence should gradually decrease as communication, production, and review routines become more institutionalized.

This does not mean that the initial task team necessarily disappears. Rather, its purpose may change. Instead of serving mainly as the place where coordination occurs because no other routine exists, it can increasingly support system review, updates, and institutional memory while more permanent communication channels become normalized. In practical terms, the task team should help:

- review each production cycle;
- identify recurring coordination problems;
- recommend revisions to indicators or sources;
- identify whether new data sources or additional institutions should be brought into the process as priorities evolve;
- support the formalization of regular communication routines; and
- help ensure continuity when individual staff members rotate.

The long-term goal is that communication and production flows become institutionalized enough that they no longer depend entirely on task-force-style coordination to survive.

Box 9. Coordination should become institutionalized over time

In the early stages, countries may rely heavily on a specific task team to connect with institutions and organize the work. Over time, however, the goal should be to normalize communication flows, clarify recurring responsibilities, stabilize production routines, and ensure that the system can continue beyond the initial coordination mechanism.

A strong task team should therefore help institutionalize communication rather than become the only channel through which institutions can work together.

2.7.4 Feedback between the anti-corruption body and the national statistical office

A key requirement of monitoring and sustainability is a structured feedback loop between the anti-corruption body and the national statistical office. This relationship is central because each institution sees something different. The national statistical office is better positioned to assess:

- whether production remains technically stable;
- whether sources are changing;
- whether comparability is being preserved;
- whether revisions are needed in metadata, frequency, or documentation;
- and whether indicators continue to meet minimum standards for official statistical production.

The anti-corruption body is better positioned to assess:

- whether the indicators remain relevant for anti-corruption monitoring;
- whether they help identify bottlenecks, trends, or implementation issues;
- whether they are being used in practice;
- and whether new institutional priorities require additional or revised indicators.

Monitoring and sustainability are strongest when these two perspectives are brought together regularly. This should not depend only on informal exchange. Countries benefit from establishing a recurring review mechanism through which both institutions can assess the performance of the indicator system and decide whether adjustments are needed.

This review process should ideally ask:

- Which indicators remain robust and useful?
- Which indicators need revision?
- Which indicators should be retired or replaced?
- Which new indicators have become feasible?
- What production or dissemination problems emerged in the previous cycle?
- What should be improved before the next cycle?
- Should new data sources or institutions be included in the next cycle?

2.7.5 Revising, adding, retiring, or improving indicators

A mature measurement system should allow the indicator set to evolve. This is one of the clearest signs that the system has become institutionalized. This review should also consider whether the indicator system is adequately capturing access-to-justice conditions over time. If complaint pathways, reporting systems, response mechanisms, or adjudication routes remain weak, countries may need to revise existing

indicators or add new ones that better reflect whether people can enter and move through accountability processes in practice. Over time, countries may need to:

- improve indicators where documentation or denominator logic can be strengthened;
- revise indicators where meaning has shifted because the underlying source changed;
- add or replace data sources for existing indicators where better, more complete, or more sustainable sources become available;
- retire indicators that are no longer useful or no longer defensible;
- replace indicators that proved unstable or conceptually weak;
- or add indicators once new sources, stronger integration, or new institutional needs make them feasible.

This should not be treated as a sign of failure. On the contrary, a system that can revise itself is more credible than one that preserves weak indicators simply for the sake of stability.

A useful principle is that the system should expand only when the added indicators improve the overall monitoring architecture. Expansion should not be driven by the mere existence of additional data. It should respond to clear institutional need and priorities, technical readiness, and sustainable production conditions. It is important that the exercise and workload remain realistic to ensure long-term sustainability.

2.7.6 From a first subset to a broader monitoring architecture

Many countries will begin with a relatively small subset of indicators. Monitoring and sustainability make it possible to move from that initial subset toward a more developed system. This may include:

- moving from a few priority indicators to a broader set, ideally across the three dimensions of the Framework;
- strengthening regular measurement and publication cycles;
- improving disaggregation;
- adding more advanced integration across sources;
- or building a dashboard or monitoring panel that organizes the indicators in a more systematic and accessible way.

A dashboard or monitoring panel should not be treated as a cosmetic endpoint. It should only be developed when the underlying indicators are already sufficiently stable, documented, and interpretable. If built too early, it may create a false appearance of maturity. If built at the right moment, it can help institutional users follow the indicators more consistently and integrate them into regular review processes.

In this sense, monitoring and sustainability open the path toward a more structured architecture of corruption-related statistics, including the possibility of regular indicator panels, annual/periodic reporting systems, or integrated monitoring dashboards.

2.7.7 Monitoring in fragile and lower-capacity settings

In fragile and lower-capacity settings, monitoring and sustainability may need to begin in a more modest form, but it is no less important. In fact, it may be even more important because the system is more likely to face discontinuity, source instability, resource constraints, and institutional turnover. In such contexts, monitoring may focus first on:

- whether the indicators can continue to be produced at all;
- whether their coverage or meaning has shifted;

- whether sources remain accessible;
- whether safety, confidentiality, or sensitivity concerns have changed; and
- whether a narrower subset should be preserved before expansion is attempted.

This should not be seen as a lesser form of monitoring. In many cases, preserving a small but credible system is the most responsible path toward longer-term institutionalization.

2.7.8 Monitoring outputs and institutional review routines

Monitoring and sustainability should be documented and routinized. Countries benefit from establishing a regular product review or routine, such as:

- an annual indicator review note;
- a revision log for indicators and sources;
- an inter-institutional coordination review memo;
- a joint review meeting between the statistical office and the anti-corruption body;
- and a formal yearly assessment of whether the system should be expanded or adjusted.

The important point is that periodic review should generate traceable institutional memory. Future users should be able to see:

- what changed;
- why it changed;
- which indicators were retained;
- which were revised or dropped; and
- what priorities were set for the next production cycle.

This is how the system begins to reproduce itself institutionally rather than depending on the momentum of the original implementation process.

References

Brackstone, G. J. (1999). Managing data quality in a statistical agency. Survey Methodology, vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 139–149.

Chopin, J., and M. F. Aebi (2020). The level of attrition in domestic violence: a valid indicator of the efficiency of a criminal justice system? European Journal of Criminology, vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 269–287.

Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (2019). Resolution 8/10, Measurement of Corruption.

Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption (2024). Methodologies and indicators for measuring corruption and the effectiveness of anti-corruption frameworks: note by the Secretariat. CAC/COSP/WG.4/2024/2.

European Commission (2017). European Statistics Code of Practice: Revised Edition 2017. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

International Monetary Fund (2021). Mexico: Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes—Data Module. IMF Country Report No. 21/277. Washington, D.C.

Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (2024). Encuesta Nacional de Calidad e Impacto Gubernamental (ENCIG) 2023: Principales resultados. Aguascalientes, Mexico.

Iwig, W., and others (2013). Data Quality Assessment Tool for Administrative Data. Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology.

Kelly, L., J. Lovett and L. Regan (2005). A Gap or a Chasm? Attrition in Reported Rape Cases. Home Office Research Study 293. London: Home Office.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2018). Implementation by Mexico of the Recommendation of the OECD Council on Good Statistical Practice: Peer Review Report. Paris.

Secretaría de la Función Pública (2019). Función Pública y Órgano Interno de Control del INEGI colaboran para prevenir y sancionar corrupción. 27 November.

Secretaría Ejecutiva del Sistema Nacional Anticorrupción (2018). Firman INEGI y SESNA convenio para generar información que permita prevenir y sancionar la corrupción. 26 September.

_____ (2024). Memoria documental: Plataforma Digital Nacional, version 1.1. Mexico City.

United Nations (2014). Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Resolution 68/261.

_____ (2019). United Nations National Quality Assurance Frameworks Manual for Official Statistics. New York.

United Nations, Economic and Social Council (2023). Statistical Commission: report on the fifty-fourth session (28 February–3 March 2023). E/2023/24–E/CN.3/2023/37, decision 54/120.

United Nations, Economic Commission for Europe (2025). Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), Version 5.2. Geneva.

United Nations, General Assembly (2021). Political Declaration of the special session against corruption: our common commitment to effectively addressing challenges and implementing measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation. A/RES/S-32/1.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2023). Statistical Framework to Measure Corruption. Vienna.

_____ (2024). Guidelines for the Governance of Statistical Data in the Criminal Justice System. Vienna.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Development Programme and UNODC-INEGI Center of Excellence in Statistical Information on Government, Crime, Victimization and Justice (2018).

Manual on Corruption Surveys: Methodological Guidelines on the Measurement of Bribery and Other Forms of Corruption through Sample Surveys. Vienna.

Villacis, B. (2025). The structure of the anti-corruption field. In A Comparative Historical Sociology of Corruption, M. Garrido, M. Zaloznaya and N. H. Wilson, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 231–251.

Appendices

These annexes compile the six practical tools that accompany the Guide. Each appendix can be used independently, but together they support the full sequence from coordination and priority-setting to validation, interpretation, and long-term sustainability.

Table of contents of Appendices

- Appendix 1. Institutional mapping and coordination assessment tool
- Appendix 2. Priority-setting and first-cycle indicator selection worksheet
- Appendix 3. Data source scoping and selection worksheet
- Appendix 4. Source validation and decision sheet
- Appendix 5. Statistical interpretation safeguard worksheet
- Appendix 6. Monitoring and sustainability review checklist

Appendix 1: Institutional mapping and coordination assessment tool

Purpose

This tool helps countries identify which institutions should be involved in the production of corruption-related statistics, what role each institution can realistically play, what data or capacities they bring, and how important they are for coordination, validation, interpretation, dissemination, and longer-term sustainability.

When to use it

Use this tool at the beginning of the process, especially during Step 1: Coordination, and update it whenever the first-cycle priorities, the indicator set, or the institutional arrangement changes.

Who should complete it

Ideally, this tool should be completed jointly by the national statistical office, the main anti-corruption or public integrity institution, and any other institutions likely to join the task team.

How to use this worksheet

- List one institution per row.
- Distinguish between the institution's formal mandate and its practical role in this process.
- Focus first on the institutions that matter for the initial cycle of indicators.
- Use the final columns to identify focal points, early coordination priorities, and follow-up actions.
- After completing the mapping table, use Parts B and C to decide who should join the task team and whether the country is ready to move to priority-setting.

Part A. Institutional mapping table

Institution	Type	Formal mandate	Practical role	Relevant data or information	Framework dimension(s)	Likely contribution	Technical capacity	Readiness to engage	Focal point	Early coordination priority	Main constraints	Follow-up action
National statistical office	NSO	Example: Official statistics production; coordination of the national statistical system	Example: Methodological lead; quality assurance; documentation	Example: Surveys, standards, and metadata,	Example: Cross-cutting / multiple	Example: Production; validation; documentation	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	Yes / No	High / Medium / Low	Example: Limited access to sectoral data	Example: Confirm technical focal point
Anti-corruption body / public integrity body	ACA	Example: Anti-corruption policy coordination; prevention; monitoring	Example: Policy lead; convening role; prioritization	Example: Complaints, prevention activities, risk assessments, monitoring information	Example: Depending on mandate of the ACA (criminal offences, preventive measures + enabling environment)	Example: Priority-setting; coordination; interpretation	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	Yes / No	High / Medium / Low	Example: Weak standardization of records	Example: Clarify role in first cycle
							High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	Yes / No	High / Medium / Low		
							High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	Yes / No	High / Medium / Low		
							High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	Yes / No	High / Medium / Low		
							High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	Yes / No	High / Medium / Low		

How to read selected columns

Column	How to complete it
Type	Examples include national statistical office, anti-corruption agency, audit institution, prosecution service, police, judiciary, procurement authority, ministry, ombuds institution, civil service authority, financial intelligence unit, civil society observatory, or academic institution.
Framework dimension(s)	Use one or more of the following: criminal offences, preventive measures, enabling environment, or cross-cutting / multiple dimensions.
Likely contribution	Examples include coordination, priority-setting, data provision, validation, interpretation, dissemination, monitoring, technical advice, or complementary evidence.
Technical capacity	A practical judgment is enough: High = structured data and regular outputs; Medium = relevant data but limited standardization or staffing; Low = potentially relevant information but weak systems for statistical use.
Readiness to engage	This should reflect actual willingness and practical conditions for participation, not only formal invitations.
Early coordination priority	Use High if the institution is essential for the first cycle, Medium if useful but not critical at the outset, and Low if it is more relevant for later phases or future expansion.

Part B. Core coordination decision summary

Decision question	Response
Which institutions should form the core of the task team?	
Which of those institutions should lead the process?	
Which additional institutions should be engaged in the first cycle?	
Which institutions should designate focal points immediately?	
Which institutions are relevant but may be engaged later?	
Which non-governmental stakeholders, if any, should be engaged in the first cycle?	
Which institutions hold the most important first-cycle data sources?	
Which institutions are likely to be essential for validation?	
Which institutions are likely to be important for interpretation or dissemination?	
What are the main early coordination bottlenecks?	
What immediate follow-up actions are required?	

Part C. Quick assessment of coordination readiness

Coordination question	Yes	Partly	No	Notes
Have the main institutions relevant to the first cycle been identified?	☐	☐	☐	
Is there clarity on which institution should lead coordination?	☐	☐	☐	
Is the national statistical office clearly positioned in the process?	☐	☐	☐	
Is the anti-corruption body clearly positioned in the process?	☐	☐	☐	
Have focal points been identified across the main institutions?	☐	☐	☐	
Is there enough information to establish or identify an appropriate task team?	☐	☐	☐	
Are the institutions holding priority data sources known?	☐	☐	☐	
Are there major legal or political barriers that need attention before the first cycle?	☐	☐	☐	
Is there enough readiness to proceed to priority-setting?	☐	☐	☐	

How to interpret the result. This tool is not meant to score institutions. Its purpose is practical: once completed, countries should be able to identify which institutions are essential to begin, who should lead and who should support, where the most relevant data are located, where coordination is likely to be difficult, and whether the country is ready to move from mapping into priority-setting and implementation planning.

Appendix 2: Priority-setting and first-cycle indicator selection worksheet

Purpose: This worksheet helps countries move from broad anti-corruption priorities to a manageable first cycle of indicators that is policy-relevant, feasible, and institutionally workable.

When to use it: Use this tool during Step 1: Coordination, after the initial institutional mapping and before the country commits to a first cycle of production.

Who should complete it: The worksheet should be completed jointly by the national statistical office, the anti-corruption body, and other institutions that form part of the agreed task team.

How to use it: Start with national and official priorities. Identify candidate indicators, assess them against a small set of practical criteria, and then decide which ones should enter the first cycle, which ones should remain in reserve, and which ones should be postponed.

Note: The goal is not to select as many indicators as possible. The goal is to select a small and defensible first set that can realistically be produced, validated, interpreted, and sustained. Countries can then gradually expand the selection of indicators over time.

Part A. From priorities to candidate indicators

Step	Question to answer	What to record	Output
1	What are the country's main anti-corruption priorities?	Priority areas, e.g. from anti-corruption strategies or policies, policy questions, reform agendas, risk assessments, public concerns	A short list of thematic priorities
2	What indicators could help operationalize those priorities?	Candidate indicators linked to each priority area[9]	An initial bank of eligible indicators
3	Which candidate indicators are realistic for a first cycle?	Judgments on feasibility, data source availability, institutional readiness, and sensitivity	A smaller set of shortlisted indicators
4	Which indicators should enter the first cycle?	Final selection and reason for selection	A first-cycle indicator set
5	Which indicators should remain in reserve?	Useful indicators not selected immediately	A reserve bank for later cycles or replacement

[9] Indicators can be chosen from the UNODC Statistical framework to measure corruption available at https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/corruption/2024/CAC_COSP_2023_CRP_Corruption_EN.pdf.

Part B. First-cycle indicator selection matrix

Complete one row per candidate indicator. Use short entries. The objective is to support a practical decision, not to produce a long narrative.

Priority area	Policy question	Candidate indicator	Framework dimension	Likely source	Policy relevance	Feasibility	Institutional readiness	Sensitivity / risk	Decision	Reason / next step
Public procurement	Where are the main integrity risks in public contracting?	Share of contracts with limited competition	Preventive measures	Procurement platform	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	First cycle / Reserve / Postpone	
		Indicator 2								
		Indicator 3								
Access to justice	Can people report and obtain a response?	Share of complaints receiving formal response within defined period	Enabling environment	Complaint or case management system	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	First cycle / Reserve / Postpone	
		Indicator 2								
		Indicator 3								
		Indicator 4								
Bribery enforcement	How far do reported cases progress?	Number or rate of bribery cases reaching prosecution	Criminal offences	Prosecution records	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	First cycle / Reserve / Postpone	
		Indicator 2								
		Indicator 3								
		Indicator 4								

Part C. Quick guide to the rating columns

Column	Use this question	Simple rating guidance
Policy relevance	Does this indicator/do these indicators respond to an important and recognized anti-corruption question?	High = strongly aligned to national priorities; Medium = useful but secondary; Low = weak connection to current priorities
Feasibility	Can the indicator be produced credibly in the current cycle?	High = source and method are already workable; Medium = possible with some effort; Low = major constraints remain
Institutional readiness	Are the institutions ready to coordinate around this indicator?	High = roles and source owners are clear; Medium = some coordination still needed; Low = institutional arrangement is weak or unclear
Sensitivity / risk	Would producing this indicator create strong safety, political, legal, or confidentiality concerns?	High = substantial caution needed; Medium = manageable with safeguards; Low = no major concern identified

Part D. First-cycle decision summary

Decision question	Response
Which indicators were selected for the first cycle?	
How many indicators were selected?	
Which indicators were postponed because important feasibility, readiness, or sensitivity constraints remain?	
Which indicators remain in reserve for later cycles despite being feasible?	
Which institutions will lead production for each selected indicator?	
What are the main risks to implementation?	
What follow-up actions are needed before moving to data collection and validation?	

How to interpret the result: By the end of this worksheet, countries should be able to justify why a small set of indicators was chosen for the first cycle, which indicators remain available for future expansion, and what practical actions are needed before production begins.

Appendix 3: Data source scoping and selection worksheet

Purpose

This worksheet helps countries compare potential data sources in a structured and practical way before deciding which sources should support first-cycle corruption indicators. It is designed for use during Step 2: Data Collection and should help teams identify sources that are relevant, sufficiently robust for the intended use, and realistic to sustain over time.

When to use this worksheet

1. When more than one possible source exists for the same indicator or policy question.
2. When the task team needs to compare administrative, survey, or complementary sources in a consistent way.
3. When countries need to decide whether a source is suitable for immediate use, should be used only with caveats, or should be deferred to a later cycle.

How to use it

1. Complete one row per potential source.
2. Use short practical judgments rather than lengthy technical narratives.
3. Compare sources against the same core criteria: relevance, coverage, access, documentation, periodicity, and immediate usability.
4. Use the final columns to record the decision and next step for each source.

Part A. Source scoping and comparison matrix

Indicator or policy question	Source name	Source type	Institution holding the source	What the source captures	Coverage	Periodicity / update cycle	Access conditions	Documentation quality	Main strengths	Main limitations	Immediate suitability	Decision / next step
Example: Bribery reporting pathway	Complaints registry	Administrative	Anti-corruption agency	Registered complaints and intake information	Partial / national / subnational / unknown	Continuous / annual extraction	Direct / by request / restricted	High / medium / low	Continuous institutional trace; useful for trends	Underreporting; may not reflect unreported events	Suitable now / suitable with caveats / later phase / not suitable	Use in first cycle; document caveats
Example: Citizen experience of bribery	Household corruption module	Survey	National statistical office	Self-reported experiences, perceptions, confidence to report	National sample	Periodic survey	Direct / depends on survey calendar	High / medium / low	Captures events not visible in administrative records	Sensitive question design; not continuous	Suitable now / suitable with caveats / later phase / not suitable	Use as complementary source

Quick coding options: Coverage = national / subnational / sectoral / partial / unknown. Source type = administrative / survey / complementary external source. Immediate suitability = suitable now / suitable with caveats / later phase / not suitable.

Part B. Short guidance for selected columns

Column	What to record
What the source captures	Describe in one short sentence what the source actually records or measures. Focus on what is observable, not on what the institution hopes the source represents.
Coverage	Indicate whether the source covers the whole country, only selected sectors or territories, or only part of the relevant population or process.
Access conditions	Record whether the source can be accessed directly, requires a formal request, depends on legal authorization, or is highly restricted.
Documentation quality	Use a practical judgment: high if concepts and fields are clear; medium if partial; low if definitions or extraction rules are unclear.
Immediate suitability	Use this column to judge whether the source can support the first cycle now, only with caveats, later, or not at all.
Decision / next step	State what should happen next: use, combine with another source, improve documentation, seek access, postpone, or discard for now.

Part C. Source selection decision summary

Decision question	Response
Which sources are most suitable for the first cycle?	
Which sources are useful but require caveats?	
Which sources should be improved before use?	
Which sources should be reserved for later cycles?	
What are the main access or documentation bottlenecks?	
Which sources should move to validation next?	

Note: This worksheet is not intended to identify the “best” source in abstract terms. Its purpose is to help countries identify the most defensible source or source combination for the first implementation cycle. In many settings, a modest but well-documented source is preferable to a more ambitious source that is difficult to access, poorly defined, or too unstable to support responsible interpretation.

Appendix 4: Source validation and decision sheet

Purpose

This worksheet helps countries document the validation of each selected source and reach a clear decision on whether the associated indicator should remain in the current cycle. It is designed for use by the national statistical office, the anti-corruption body, and the agreed coordination arrangement.

When to use this tool

1. After the source has been identified and scoped during data collection.
2. Before the indicator is moved to interpretation, dissemination, or regular production.
3. Whenever a source changes materially and needs to be reassessed.

How to use it

1. Complete one sheet per source-indicator pair.
2. Use the scoring guidance below for each criterion.
3. Let the national statistical office lead the technical review.
4. Let the anti-corruption body contribute to the conceptual and institutional interpretation of the source.
5. Use the final section to record the decision of the task team.

Source validation and decision sheet

Field	Response
Priority area	
Indicator code and title (Use Statistical Framework for codes)	
Institution responsible for the source	
Unit / focal point	
Type of source (administrative, survey, complementary)	
Reference period / time coverage	
Population, cases, or events covered	

Validation criteria

Criterion	Key question	Notes
Completeness	Is the data needed to calculate the indicator available and sufficiently complete for the intended use?	
Internal consistency	Do dates, statuses, totals, and classifications relate to one another coherently within the source?	
Documentation	Are metadata, variable descriptions, rules for classifying and recording data, and institutional practices sufficiently documented?	
Definitions and classifications	Do the concepts in the source align sufficiently with the intended indicator?	
Comparability	Can the source be compared over time, across territories, or across institutions without major distortion?	
Denominator logic	Is the numerator/denominator logic clearly specified and appropriate for the policy question?	
Accessibility and legal feasibility	Can the source be accessed and used for statistical production under existing legal and procedural conditions?	
Stability for repeated production	Can the source support repeated production in the current or next statistical cycle?	

Summary of known limitations

Main exclusions, blind spots, breaks in series, unresolved ambiguities, confidentiality restrictions, or reasons for caution:

Final decision

Item	Response
Decision (Ready for immediate use / usable with caveats / not yet ready / replace indicator)	
Main caveats to be stated if used	
Immediate follow-up actions	
Technical lead review (NSO)	
Conceptual review (anti-corruption body)	
Date of coordination decision	

Note: A weak score should not be treated as a failure. In many first cycles, the most useful outcome of validation is to identify what can be produced credibly now, what can be used only with caveats, and what should be improved or replaced before entering into regular statistical production.

Appendix 5: Statistical interpretation safeguard worksheet

Purpose

This worksheet helps institutions interpret corruption-related indicators in a disciplined and policy-relevant way without overstating what the data can support. It is designed to prevent common mistakes such as treating one indicator as proof of a broad trend or drawing causal conclusions that go beyond the available evidence.

When to use this tool

1. After an indicator or source has passed validation and is ready for use.
2. Before drafting narrative interpretation, briefing notes, dashboards, or public communication.
3. When different institutions need to agree on what the indicator does and does not mean.
4. When the indicator is sensitive, politically salient, or vulnerable to misuse.

How to use it

1. Complete one worksheet per indicator or closely related indicator set.
2. Keep responses short and operational; this is a decision tool, not a narrative essay.
3. Use the final columns to identify safe messages, caveats, and communication restrictions.
4. Where uncertainty is high, prefer narrower and more descriptive interpretations.

Part A. Core interpretation worksheet

Indicator / output	What does it directly show?	What does it not show?	Main caveats	Safe comparisons	Policy relevance	Risk of misuse	Communication note / agreed wording
				Over time / across institutions / across groups / not comparable yet		Low / Medium / High	
				Over time / across institutions / across groups / not comparable yet		Low / Medium / High	
				Over time / across institutions / across groups / not comparable yet		Low / Medium / High	
				Over time / across institutions / across groups / not comparable yet		Low / Medium / High	

Quick guide for selected columns

Column	How to fill it
What does it directly show?	State the most defensible descriptive meaning of the indicator in one sentence.
What does it not show?	Record the main limitation. For example: does not measure prevalence, does not show causality, does not capture unreported cases.
Main caveats	Note legal changes, denominator issues, weak coverage, reporting incentives, missing populations, or changes in institutional practice.
Safe comparisons	Indicate which comparisons are defensible: over time, between institutions, between territories, between groups, or none yet.
Risk of misuse	Use Low, Medium, or High depending on how easily the indicator could be overstretched or politicized.
Communication note	Write the wording that should be used consistently in technical notes, briefs, or dashboards.

Part B. Interpretation decision summary

Decision question	Response (use separate space for all necessary details)
What is the narrowest safe interpretation of this indicator?	
What are the two most important caveats that must always accompany it?	
Which comparisons are acceptable at this stage?	
Which comparisons should be avoided?	
Can the indicator be used in public dissemination?	
If yes, under what wording or restrictions?	
Does the anti-corruption body need to complement this with policy context?	
Is an additional note, footnote, or metadata explanation required?	

Part C. Red-flag checklist before dissemination

Question	Yes	Partly	No	Notes
Could a reader wrongly interpret this indicator as a measure of total corruption?				
Could legal or institutional changes explain movement in the indicator?				
Does the denominator affect the message?				
Are there groups, territories, or cases that the indicator				

Question	Yes	Partly	No	Notes
does not capture well?				
Would public release require a caveat, metadata note, or careful framing?				
Has the interpretation been reviewed jointly by the NSO and anti-corruption body before publication?				

Note: This worksheet does not replace technical metadata or policy analysis. Its purpose is to create a disciplined bridge between validated indicators and defensible interpretation. Where uncertainty remains high, the safest option is usually to narrow the message rather than broaden the claim.

Appendix 6: Monitoring and sustainability review checklist

Purpose

This checklist helps countries review whether the production and use of corruption-related statistics are becoming sustainable over time. It is designed for use after the first cycle has begun, and especially during Step 7: Monitoring and Sustainability.

When to use it

Use this tool periodically to assess whether institutional roles are clear, indicators are still relevant, production routines are functioning, documentation remains updated, and the system is strong enough to continue, adjust, or expand.

Who should complete it

This checklist should ideally be completed jointly by the national statistical office, the anti-corruption body, and the institutions that contribute directly to production, validation, interpretation, and dissemination.

How to use this tool

1. Complete the review at agreed intervals, for example, after the first production cycle and at least once per year thereafter.
2. Use the matrix to identify strengths, bottlenecks, and issues requiring follow-up.
3. Do not treat the checklist as a compliance exercise only; it should support practical decisions on revision, expansion, simplification, or replacement of indicators and routines.
4. Use the final summary section to agree on concrete next steps, responsibilities, and review dates.

Part A. Monitoring and sustainability review matrix

System element	Current status	Evidence / observation	Main risk or bottleneck	Still fit for purpose?	Action needed	Responsible institution	Priority	Next review date
Leadership and institutional ownership	Working / Partial / Weak			Yes / Partly / No			High / Medium / Low	
Functioning of the task team	Working / Partial / Weak			Yes / Partly / No			High / Medium / Low	
Availability of focal points across institutions	Working / Partial / Weak			Yes / Partly / No			High / Medium / Low	
Regular production of selected indicators	Working / Partial / Weak			Yes / Partly / No			High / Medium / Low	
Timeliness of updates	Working / Partial / Weak			Yes / Partly / No			High / Medium / Low	
Documentation and metadata maintenance	Working / Partial / Weak			Yes / Partly / No			High / Medium / Low	
Validation routines still functioning	Working / Partial / Weak			Yes / Partly / No			High / Medium / Low	
Interpretation safeguards being applied	Working / Partial / Weak			Yes / Partly / No			High / Medium / Low	
Dissemination arrangements functioning	Working / Partial / Weak			Yes / Partly / No			High / Medium / Low	

Use of indicators in policy or monitoring processes	Working / Partial / Weak			Yes / Partly / No			High / Medium / Low	
Need to revise or replace any indicator	Working / Partial / Weak			Yes / Partly / No			High / Medium / Low	
Possibility of adding indicators in the next cycle	Working / Partial / Weak			Yes / Partly / No			High / Medium / Low	
Confidentiality, security, and data governance safeguards	Working / Partial / Weak			Yes / Partly / No			High / Medium / Low	
Gender, inclusion, and access-to-justice considerations	Working / Partial / Weak			Yes / Partly / No			High / Medium / Low	
Longer-term sustainability of the production arrangement	Working / Partial / Weak			Yes / Partly / No			High / Medium / Low	

Part B. Quick sustainability snapshot

Review question	Yes	Partly	No	Notes
Are the leading institutions still clearly responsible for the process?				
Is the production of first-cycle indicators happening with an agreed routine?				
Are metadata and documentation being updated consistently?				
Are the indicators still relevant to national anti-corruption priorities?				
Are interpretation and communication safeguards still being respected?				
Are dissemination arrangements helping indicators reach intended users?				
Is there a documented process for revising, replacing, or adding indicators?				
Can the current arrangement continue without depending on one or two individuals only?				

Part C. Decision summary and next steps

Decision question	Response
What is working well enough to retain as part of the regular production system?	
What needs immediate corrective action before the next cycle?	
Which indicator(s), if any, should be revised, replaced, or postponed?	
Which additional indicator(s) could realistically be added in the next cycle?	
Does the current task team need to remain in its present form, evolve, or hand over some functions to routine institutional channels?	
What agreements, protocols, or documentation should be updated or formalized?	
When should the next sustainability review take place?	

Practical interpretation of results

- If most key functions are working, the country may focus on consolidation and gradual expansion.
- If several functions are only partially working, the priority should be to stabilize routines, documentation, and responsibilities before expanding indicators.
- If several functions are weak, the country may need to narrow the cycle, simplify arrangements, or rebuild coordination before proceeding further.