Despite increasing critique on widely used cross-country perception-based corruption indexes, there is scarce evidence testing the validity of these measurements. Using media content analysis and instrumental variable method, this paper provides evidence on how the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International is influenced by media. An exogenous increase in anti-corruption news coverage caused by media infrastructure changes might lead to a higher incidence of perceived corruption. In addition, the Corruption Perception Index positively responds to a country’s ratification of global or regional anti-corruption conventions. These findings suggest that many raters of perception-based indexes tend to portray corruption as more serious and pervasive when exposing news about corruption-crackdown efforts by a country’s government institutions.

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