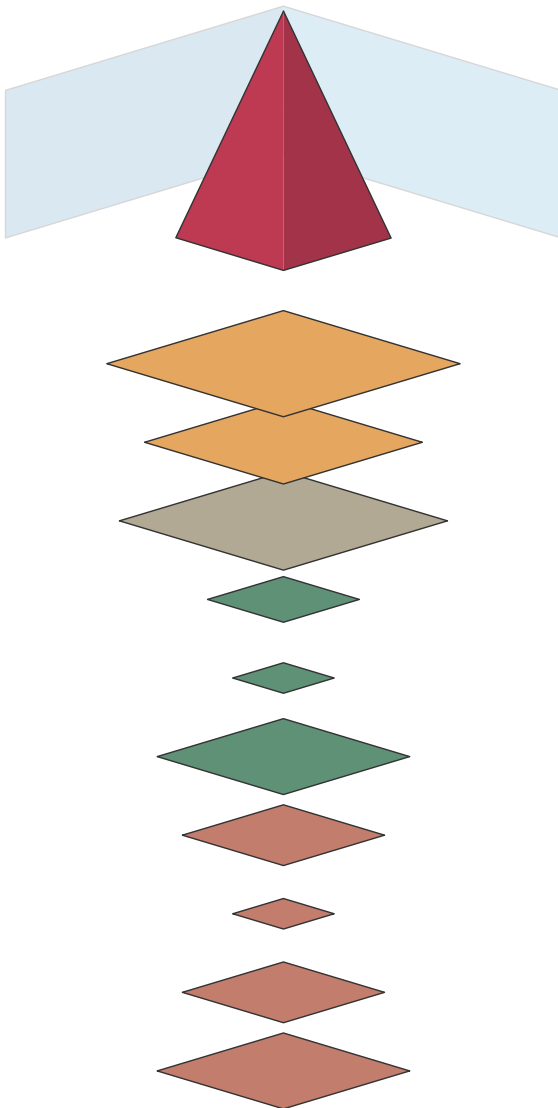




BELARUS




5.08 CRIMINALITY SCORE

83rd of 193 countries
12th of 44 European countries
9th of 17 Central & Eastern European countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS **4.40**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	7.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	5.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	6.50
FLORA CRIMES	3.00
FAUNA CRIMES	2.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	5.00
HEROIN TRADE	4.00
COCAINE TRADE	2.00
CANNABIS TRADE	4.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	5.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS **5.75**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	4.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	9.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	5.00

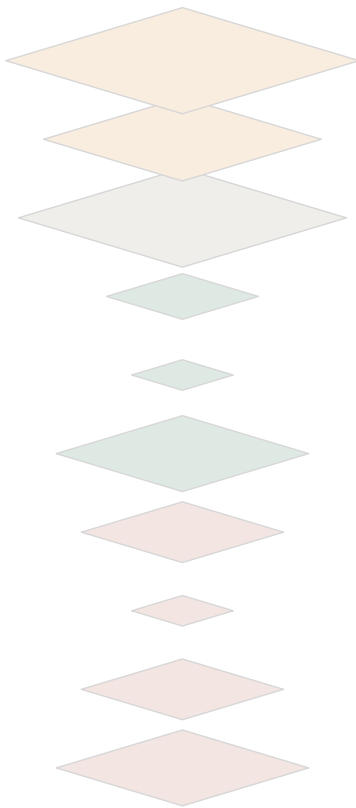
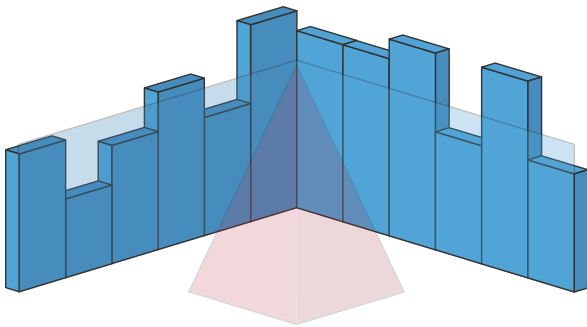


3.79 RESILIENCE SCORE

142nd of 193 countries
43rd of 44 European countries
16th of 17 Central & Eastern European countries



BELARUS




3.79 RESILIENCE SCORE



142nd of 193 countries
43rd of 44 European countries
16th of 17 Central & Eastern European countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	3.50
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	2.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	3.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	4.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	3.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	4.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	4.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	5.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	3.00
PREVENTION	5.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	3.00



5.08 CRIMINALITY SCORE

83rd of 193 countries
12th of 44 European countries
9th of 17 Central & Eastern European countries

 CRIMINAL MARKETS	4.40
 CRIMINAL ACTORS	5.75



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Belarus is a country of origin, transit point and destination for human trafficking. Traffickers exploit both Belarusian nationals and foreign victims domestically and abroad. Since 2011, most human trafficking violations have occurred domestically. Over the same period, the number of identified Belarusian human trafficking victims has decreased. Trafficking victims are primarily men who are subjected to labour exploitation in the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, Belarusian women who travel to work in the hotel or adult entertainment industries are subjected to sex trafficking. Human trafficking in Belarus appears to be carried out by a mix of individuals, mafia-style criminal groups, international criminal networks and state-embedded actors, such as low-level customs and border officials. There is a possibility that escort prostitution may increase due to limited work prospects and the introduction of simplified visa procedures from EU countries.

TRADE

Belarus appears to be a source and transit country for illicit arms. The market is mainly structured around illegal arms stolen from former Soviet stockpiles, illicit flows from Ukraine distributed in Russia due to weak border controls, and/or illicit arms transported into the rest of Europe via Poland, in collaboration with Polish organized crime groups. There is also significant evidence of state facilitated arms trafficking into conflict zones or countries under sanctions. Additionally, the ongoing war in Ukraine remains a destabilizing factor in the proliferation of arms, with arms that are trafficked from Ukraine to Belarus usually crossing via the Chernihiv or Kyiv routes. Overall, the arms trade is a significant source of income for Belarus.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora crimes in Belarus are generally limited to cases of illegal logging that involve locals who need fuel. Perpetrators are often legitimate businesses that fell more trees than is legally allowed. Organized crime groups are present only to a limited extent. While there are no significant flows out of the country, if any market exists, it is of a small scale with Belarus serving as a source and transit country. Meanwhile, there are indications that Belarus acts as a transit for illegal wildlife trafficked from Poland to Russia, and possibly Ukraine. Experts have also speculated that animals may have been destined for medicinal markets in Asia.

In terms of non-renewable resource crimes, most are related to the illegal mining of sand and small-scale amber excavation. Irregular migrants carry out large-scale work, with possible links to human trafficking. Additionally, with a highly developed shadow economy and high rates of corruption, Minsk is said to be following the 'amber fever' in Ukraine, where government forces struggle to contain amber mafias. Similarly, coal from the Donbas is reportedly smuggled via the Russian Federation through Belarus and into the EU. Additionally, since the large-scale excavation of sand is labour-intensive and requires large machines, it is likely that groups involved possess equipment or are supported by companies owning the necessary machinery – indicating a mafia-style organization. Belarus has also been suspected, by Russian officials, of avoiding export duties on petroleum products by shipping them under different names.

DRUGS

Cannabis and synthetic drugs are the most common in Belarus. People growing cannabis for personal use dominate the country's trade. Meanwhile, any transnational dimension appears to be limited, as local suppliers largely meet domestic demand. Synthetic drugs is the fastest-growing criminal market in Belarus. Local producers, consisting of smaller mafia-style groups, run the market, while larger transnational networks involving foreign producers retail the drugs online. There has been some success in locating stash houses, but authorities struggle to curb the trade.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

The frequent recurrence of large-scale, high-level corruption cases involving officials suggests there is a significant connection between criminal markets and state actors. State-embedded actors are responsible for major losses from both national and municipal budgets. Additionally, it is likely that customs and border officials are involved in the trafficking of goods in the region, and the government has been accused of smuggling arms to conflict zones and controversial regimes. Diplomatic cables have also labelled Belarus as a quasi-mafia state, where distinguishing between state and organized crime activities has been impossible. There is a lack of current information on mafia-style groups in Belarus, as a number of former members of mafia-style groups have, since the 1990s, incrementally moved their activities into the legal realm and become public officials and business owners. While active mafia-style groups still exist in various criminal markets, it is likely that they are keeping a low profile due to the harsh punishment and extensive resources spent on policing.

There is evidence that criminal networks in Belarus are involved in drug distribution and trafficking but mostly locally, while activities involving arms and human trafficking networks, as well as those active in cybercrimes, are more international in nature. Connections have also been found between criminal networks and travel agencies to provide fake documents. Nevertheless, there is a lack of information as to the names and defined leadership of criminal networks

in the country. Criminal networks in Belarus are closely related to Russian organized crime groups. There is also cooperation with criminal networks from neighbouring countries, as well as other states and regions that do not share borders. Overall, foreign actors are likely active across all criminal markets in Belarus, with most of these engaging in operations using ethnic ties.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Belarus is characterized as having an authoritarian regime, where despite technically having a democratic process, there is no separation of powers and the president has full executive control and significant legislative power. While there is no proof of direct involvement by the government in 'classic' organized crime activities, there is evidence of practices akin to financial scams. European neighbours, international organizations, and opposition groups have also raised concerns about corruption, violations of human rights, and undemocratic activities in Belarus since the 1990s. The government has introduced laws to combat corruption and declared the fight against corruption the most important priority of the state. At the same time, the government retains power to shut down any corruption-related publications or reports, based on a range of restrictions. Additionally, most political decisions and legislative bodies are controlled and influenced by the presidential administration with no transparency and there is a complete lack of accountability within the security agencies.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Belarus's judicial system lacks independence and is under the strict control of the president, who appoints the majority of judges and has allegedly used the system as a tool to crack down on opponents. Since the 2020 post-election protests, there have been several reports of Belarusian security forces arbitrarily detaining thousands of people and systematically subjecting hundreds to torture and other ill-treatment within the detention system. In terms of law enforcement services, Belarus has a ministry of internal affairs, as well as various national bodies responsible for specific aspects of national law enforcement and different types of police, including the organized crime and corruption police. The police force in the country suffers from widespread corruption, inadequate training, resource shortages and poor working conditions. With regards to territorial integrity, Belarus is a transit country for various criminal markets given its geographic location.

However, it has significantly strengthened the control of its western and southern borders because of the conflict in Ukraine and NATO's reinforced presence in the Baltic States and Poland. Meanwhile, its border with Russia remains vulnerable.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Belarus established the Department of Financial Monitoring in 2003 to prevent money laundering via specialized working groups. The department maintains information sharing agreements with 39 other states and claims to comply with international standards. Nevertheless, it is difficult to assess whether authorities efficiently address money laundering given the structure of the political system and corruption allegations. For the moment, the government has tight control of the economy, with its jurisdiction covering both market and non-market institutions, as well as the ability to influence economic outcomes.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The government has put in place prevention strategies that cover human trafficking, money laundering, terrorism financing, corruption and general crime prevention. Some effort has also been made to prevent drug-related crimes. However, most resources are spent on developing law enforcement efficiency and related investigative units. Additionally, victims of drug-related crimes are perceived as enemies of the public and receive limited support. The media environment is severely restricted, with censorship, threats and violence against critical journalists and bloggers being the norm in the country.

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