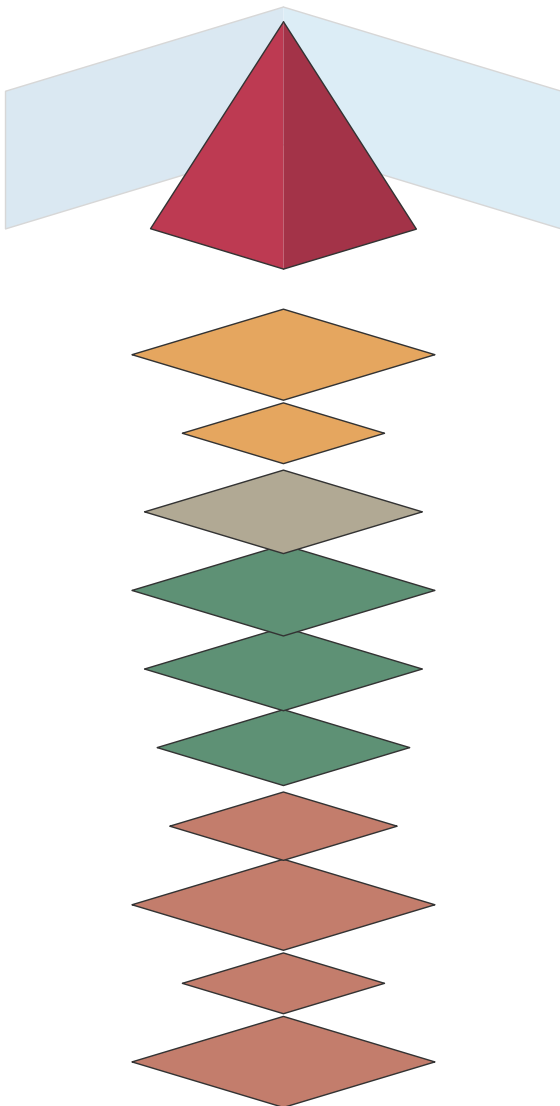


 **BENIN**



 **5.25**
CRIMINALITY SCORE

76th of 193 countries
26th of 54 African countries
10th of 15 West African countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS** **5.25**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	6.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	4.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	5.50
FLORA CRIMES	6.00
FAUNA CRIMES	5.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	5.00
HEROIN TRADE	4.50
COCAINE TRADE	6.00
CANNABIS TRADE	4.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	6.00

 **CRIMINAL ACTORS** **5.25**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	6.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	8.00

 **3.54**
RESILIENCE SCORE

151st of 193 countries
29th of 54 African countries
9th of 15 West African countries



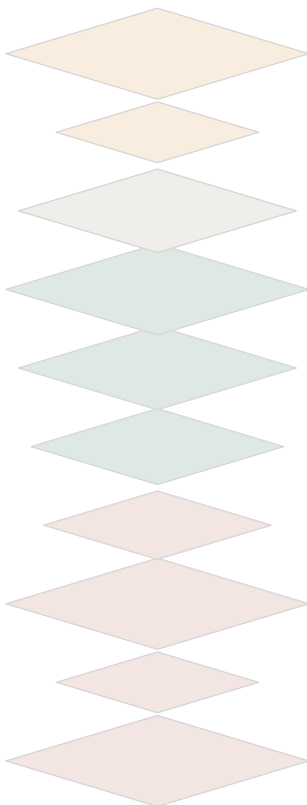
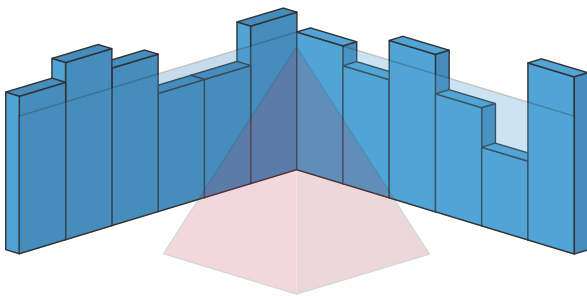
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BENIN



3.54

RESILIENCE SCORE

151st of 193 countries
29th of 54 African countries
9th of 15 West African countries

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



5.25

CRIMINALITY SCORE

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CRIMINAL MARKETS 5.25



CRIMINAL ACTORS 5.25



CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Benin is reportedly a country of origin as well as a transit hub and a destination market for human trafficking. Opportunistic, rather than organized, traffickers move victims, mainly women and children, from the impoverished northern regions to the urban south. Foreign victims trafficked into the country are mainly from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and victims moved out of Benin, usually children trafficked into domestic servitude, are predominantly exploited in West and Central Africa.

Migrant smuggling into and out of Benin has increased, with the country becoming a waypoint for irregular migrants from West and Central Africa, and to a lesser extent for Beninese citizens leaving the country. Nigerian smuggling networks reportedly use Benin as an operations hub where falsified travel documents can be obtained. Smuggling usually takes place along the border with Nigeria and is organized by criminal gangs. It is mostly characterized as low level, low profit and broadly non-violent.

TRADE

Arms trafficking has dramatically increased, and Benin is now a major transit point for weapons. Domestic ownership of firearms has increased fourfold in ten-year period from 2007 to 2017. The country's instability, particularly since 2019, and the threat from domestic terrorist groups have contributed to the growing levels of arms trafficking within the country. The threat posed by Boko Haram in the region has also likely affected illicit flows of arms, leading to a growth in the flow of small arms into Benin.

ENVIRONMENT

Despite considerable investment by the international community, Benin is experiencing a high level of deforestation, having lost 22% of its forests since 2000. The illicit trade of rosewood into China remains the most pervasive practice, with criminal actors enjoying political protection from business, law enforcement and politicians. Forest governance is poor, and the data collected and published is suspicious and thought to underreport the level of deforestation and illegal felling taking place. There is also an illegal fauna crimes market, which sees the trade of endangered and rare species between Benin and China. While an increase in elephants in Benin is encouraging, pangolin poaching remains an enormous threat to the species. Benin has become more vulnerable to external shocks, including climate hazards, the price fluctuations of oil and cotton and occurrences in

Nigeria, Benin's primary trading partner. Due to its high cost in Benin, fuel is smuggled in from Nigeria by criminal networks working near the border and there is also a concern that the country plays a part in the illicit gold trade.

DRUGS

High levels of corruption make Benin vulnerable to cocaine trafficking flows. It is a known transit hub for South American cocaine supplying European markets, with Cotonou Airport considered an important transit point for the Andean drug. Notably, in 2019, a shipment of 4.4 tonnes of cocaine was seized in Montevideo, Uruguay, bound for Cotonou, and with an estimated street value of \$1 billion on the European market. Violence does not often accompany the illegal trade. Similarly, Benin is a known transit hub for heroin being moved through Africa, destined for the European markets. It is likely that heroin entering Africa via Kenya is trafficked through Benin by land or continental air routes, however, domestic consumption of heroin remains low. The US Department of State has noted the prevalence of drug trafficking within Benin and the UN has labelled Cotonou Airport a significant drug transit point.

Cannabis is the only drug produced locally in Benin, though mostly on a small scale. The proximity of Benin's capital, Porto-Novo, to its border with Nigeria allows traffickers in the city to deal directly with Nigerian syndicates. In 2018, there were seizures of cannabis moving from Nigeria's Edo province into Benin indicating a possible cross-border trade route through West Africa. Nevertheless, low levels of violence are associated with the cannabis trade and local consumption is relatively small. Benin is a minor but growing transit country for synthetic drugs, and its port of Cotonou is the main entry point for much of the tramadol that enters West Africa, while methamphetamine is brought into the country from Nigeria and the DRC. Corruption is also essential for this market, as was demonstrated in 2018, when seven executives and one member of Parliament were arrested for their role in smuggling synthetic drugs, while Benin's official pharmacy body was suspended for six months after being implicated in the trading of illicit synthetic products.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Foreign actors, particularly from Nigeria, are particularly well established in Benin's criminal markets, especially drug trafficking. Congolese human trafficking syndicates are also present in Benin, moving Beninese victims into the DRC, and Chinese criminal groups are heavily involved in the rosewood and illicit fauna markets. Benin is also increasingly being targeted by criminal networks from Nigeria, Ghana and other African regions, alongside South

American criminals building networks at its ports. At the same time, collusion between domestic criminal networks and the state is growing. While organized hierarchies are usually absent, the cultural homogeneity of border communities, mainly Yoruba, helps facilitate cooperation in illicit cross-border activity between Benin and Nigeria. These networks generally enable the fuel, drugs and environmental markets.

Corruption is high within Benin, and bribery and patronage networks are commonplace, serving as obstacles in the proper functioning of law enforcement and the judiciary. The theft and diversion of public funds is also widespread, while the laws criminalizing corruption are poorly implemented and enforced. The collusion between state actors and criminal networks is particularly established in the smuggling of illicit flora and fauna. There is currently no evidence of mafia-style groups operating in the country.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Democracy and the separation of powers is guaranteed in Benin, however, state institutions are weak in practice and subject to political manipulation. Although faring better compared to its neighbours, political stability in Benin is threatened, and the government has shown little will to curb existing organized crime. The disputed 2019 legislative elections created high political tensions, and no opposition parties are represented in Parliament as they were either prevented from standing or boycotted the election. Amnesty International has reported concerns about the growing repression of dissident voices in Benin. Transparency and accountability are poor in the country and there are fears that with the re-election of Patrice Talon in 2021, transparency and checks on the president's power will be further eroded. The president has already interfered inappropriately with government institutions by attempting to change their electoral regulations. While Benin performs better than its neighbours with regard to transparent governance, it is poor by global standards.

Benin is party to all major international treaties pertaining to organized crime. Yet the country's capacity and willingness to implement and enforce these measures is lacking. However, locally there appears to be no hostility between Benin and its neighbours, and its rhetoric with Nigeria, an important trade companion, is constructive and cooperative. Benin also has joint programmes in place with the US, directed at drugs, that have improved the country's ability to combat drug trafficking. The country's national legal framework against organized crime remains inadequate and there is little capacity and willingness to improve it. There is no record of any clear national strategies to address organized crime, and the weakness of current legal regulations allows for significant smuggling and trafficking flows to persist.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Benin's judicial system is weak and ineffective, burdened by insufficient funding and corruption. Political interference is inappropriate, and the president increasingly appoints his own judges. The delays and high costs of the justice system ensure the prevalence of mob justice with many criminals able to escape legal sanctions through corruption. The newly established terrorism courts in the country are also massively misused to prosecute people on terrorism charges. Beninese prisons are overcrowded and inmates are denied basic human rights. Law enforcement capacity has improved, following joint training and information sharing with the US as well as the merging of the police force and the gendarmerie to create the Republican Police. There have been notable arrests related to drug and human trafficking, however, these don't seem to have had an overall effect on criminal activity. Despite some improvements, corruption is still widespread among law enforcement and public trust in the institution is low.

Benin's borders with Niger, Nigeria and Burkina Faso are porous and these countries pose a substantial threat to national security with the overspill of terrorism, as was seen in 2020 when a police border post was attacked near Burkina Faso. Arguably, the 16-month closure of the Benin-Nigeria border that ended in December 2020 drastically curtailed the flow of arms and criminal and terrorist groups have had their supply networks restricted.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Benin is among the countries that suffer the highest risks of money laundering and terrorist financing globally, facilitated predominantly through the purchasing of real estate and by way of casinos. The regulation of cash transactions is weak, and Benin's underdeveloped financial system limits its ability to combat money laundering. However, new legislation concerning information sharing and the development of a financial intelligence unit is seeing improvements. Benin's economic regulatory environment is poor, and it

is not conducive to doing business. A lack of employment opportunities has expanded certain criminal markets such as fuel and oil smuggling, as well as environmental crimes. Conflict and instability have weakened Benin's economic regulatory capacity, but efforts are being made to strengthen this through domestic policy measures and foreign technical and financial support.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Some efforts have been made to enhance support for victims of organized crime, especially child victims, but this often comes at the expense of responsibility towards adults. There are few measures in place for the treatment of drug addiction, prisoner rehabilitation or legal employment opportunities, and Benin only has a third of the international interventions in place that support the exit from modern slavery. Although Benin appears receptive to collaboration with neighbouring countries, such as Nigeria, to strengthen efforts to stem cross-border crimes, national prevention efforts are almost non-existent and curbing organized crime does not appear to be a priority for the government. Civil society is reasonably healthy with organizations such as Social Watch Benin setting up working groups and drafting reports on social, economic and environmental governance. However, there has been a worrying shift recently where changes to the penal code have suppressed criticism of the government and seen an increase in arbitrary arrests of activists and journalists. The introduction of the new Digital Code has restricted press freedom and created a repressive media environment. While there were no human rights violations against journalists in 2019 the actions of the government in this area are concerning, with all of the above issues contributing to Benin's significantly worsening media landscape.

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