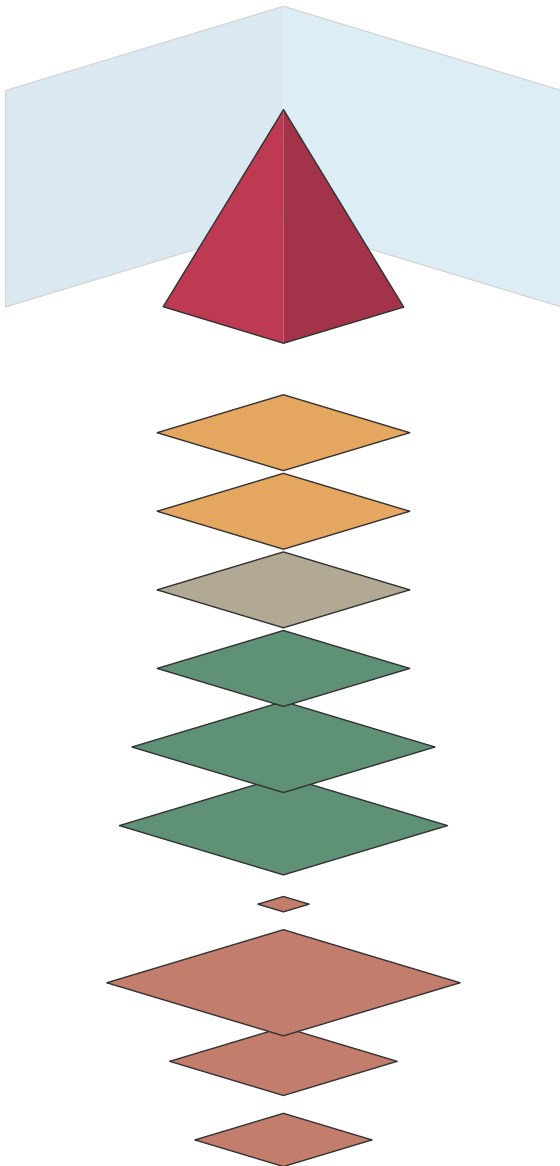




COSTA RICA



4.99

CRIMINALITY SCORE

88th of 193 countries

18th of 35 American countries

7th of 8 Central American countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS

4.85

HUMAN TRAFFICKING 5.00

HUMAN SMUGGLING 5.00

ARMS TRAFFICKING 5.00

FLORA CRIMES 5.00

FAUNA CRIMES 6.00

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES 6.50

HEROIN TRADE 1.00

COCAINE TRADE 7.00

CANNABIS TRADE 4.50

SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE 3.50



CRIMINAL ACTORS

5.13

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS 6.50

CRIMINAL NETWORKS 6.00

STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS 1.50

FOREIGN ACTORS 6.50



5.50

RESILIENCE SCORE

57th of 193 countries

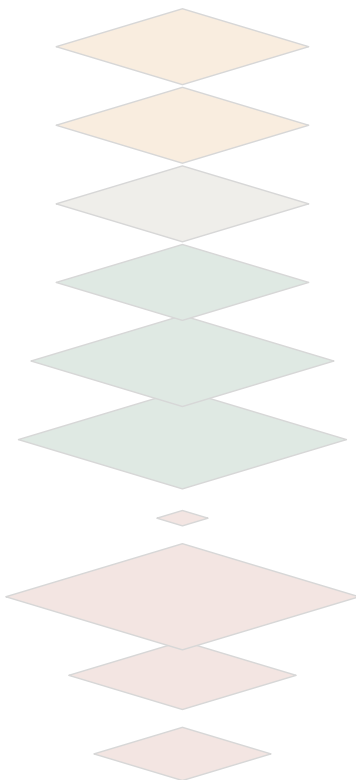
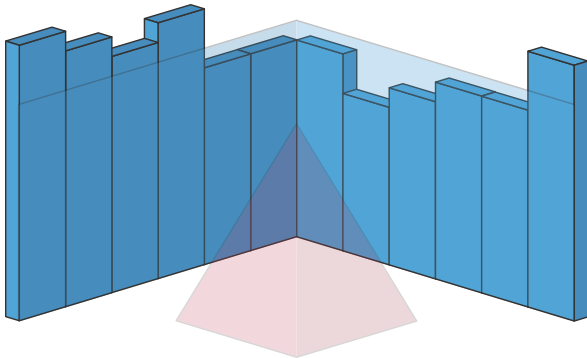
10th of 35 American countries

1st of 8 Central American countries





COSTA RICA



5.50

RESILIENCE SCORE

57th of 193 countries

10th of 35 American countries

1st of 8 Central American countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	7.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	6.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.50
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	5.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	5.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	4.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	4.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	5.00
PREVENTION	5.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	6.50



4.99

CRIMINALITY SCORE

88th of 193 countries

18th of 35 American countries

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CRIMINAL MARKETS 4.85



CRIMINAL ACTORS 5.13



CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Costa Rica is increasingly a source and transit country for human trafficking involving labour and sex exploitation as well as organ trafficking. The trafficking market has grown in part due to tourist demand for sexual services, however, because of COVID-19, borders were closed, shutting down the tourism industry and possibly reducing demand. Nicaraguans fleeing state violence are vulnerable to trafficking in Costa Rica, while Costa Rican victims are primarily exploited in the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Canada, Spain and the Bahamas. Within Costa Rica, victims have been identified to originate in Peru, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Russia, China, South Africa and the Philippines to name but a few. Costa Rica is a transit country, primarily to the US, for people smuggled from Cuba and Haiti as well as from Asia and Africa. Since 2018, there has been an increase in human smuggling at the northern border, with many Nicaraguans using irregular crossing points with the help of 'coyote' networks. A Chinese smuggling network with contacts in Asia, Europe and South America has also been identified, smuggling people to Costa Rica via Panama. Importantly, corrupt officials have been implicated in human smuggling.

TRADE

Costa Rica is a significant transit country for arms heading both north and south, which are probably sourced from Panama or trafficked from Nicaragua and Colombia by local fishermen. The legal market also fuels the illegal arms trade, with cases of armouries, legally importing weapons from the US and Turkey, found to have links to arms trafficking groups. Thus, criminal organizations have easy access to firearms, evident in the high rates of firearm-related homicide.

ENVIRONMENT

Costa Rica is an important source country for flora and fauna crimes. Timber, namely cocobolo, is trafficked to Asia, and Asian nationals reportedly hire local intermediaries to facilitate its extraction. Due to flexible customs controls, timber is packed with teak, and subsequently approved for extraction and exportation. As a result of its biodiversity, Costa Rica is a source country for live animals and animal parts, including turtles, iguanas, snakes, frogs, cat pelts, shark fins, butterflies, beetles, wasps and spiders. There is also easy access to animal-made products, such as shell bracelets, reptile-skin wallets and bird feathers. In some cases, animals are exported by commercial shipments. Tourists have also transported live snakes, frogs, lizards,

hummingbirds and coatis through the airports. Within Costa Rica, there is a black market for turtle eggs, birds, monkeys and fish, which has grown over the course of 2020 in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The country has been a major supplier of shark fins to Hong Kong, Taiwan and some European countries, but since 2014, legal exportation has been debated. There are also reports of shark carcasses being used to traffic cocaine to Mexico, another major shark meat recipient, enabled by corruption. Market-related violence has been recorded, and an environmentalist was killed in 2013 while trying to protect endangered turtle eggs. Illegal gold mining and associated mercury trafficking are reportedly increasing in Costa Rica. The extraction of gold at Las Crucitas mine was handled by a foreign firm until 2011, but mining regulation changes resulted in the company's concession being revoked. In light of this, illegal miners started exploiting the remaining reserves. Illegal extraction commonly involves Nicaraguan operators, known for using rudimentary methods to expose gold with mercury. Costa Rican gold exports do not match production, and some export documents are falsified to enable gold trafficking by criminal networks, mainly to clients in the US.

DRUGS

Costa Rica's location and vast maritime territory make it highly vulnerable to drug trafficking. Colombian cocaine is trafficked through the country to the US and Europe, by sea, air and land routes. Numerous international trafficking rings use both the Port of Limón on the Atlantic coast, as well as ports on the Pacific coast. Initially, Costa Rican criminal structures mainly guarded drug shipments and were paid with drugs, but domestic groups now run trafficking operations. As a result, an increase in local consumption has been observed. Still, small local networks help transport and store the drugs, while certain Costa Rican groups often control different dealing spots throughout the country. Significantly, former security and police officials have been arrested for leading and facilitating drug trafficking networks. Similar to other Latin American states, Costa Rica has seen an increase in homicide rates related to drug trafficking. The cannabis market is sourced from domestic plants, mainly grown in mountainous indigenous areas, and by imports, known as High Red, from Jamaica. The latter primarily enters the country by boats passing through Colombia's San Andres and Providencia archipelago. Costa Rican cannabis is of low quality and unlikely to be exported. Smaller cannabis seizures usually occur in the province of San José, with the largest occurring in Limón.

While there is no significant market for heroin, Costa Rica is a destination market for small amounts of synthetic drugs imported from Asia and the US. Synthetic drug

use is increasing, and the most commonly seized drugs are Ecstasy, LSD and K2, with ketamine also becoming increasingly popular.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Los Moreco is a well-structured mafia-style group involved in drug trafficking across the country, mainly in the provinces of Limón, Alajuela, Guanacaste and San José. Several other drug gangs also operate in Costa Rica, including those led by Pollo, El Indio, Ojos Bellos and Gato Cole. In addition, a fishmonger in Limón is allegedly a leading drug trafficking figure, aided by his political connections and stance against violence. Other groups, however, use violence, with Los Moreco found in possession of AR15 rifles, grenades and ammunition. Loose criminal networks engage in drug dealing, human trafficking as well as environmental crime and

contraband. Some of these loose structures also facilitate cocaine transportation, while others invest drug money in loan shark schemes. They tend to be widespread across the country with links to Colombia and Mexico.

State-embedded actors do not appear to engage directly in organized crime in Costa Rica. Although assessed as less corrupt than counterparts in the region, there have been indications of ties of law enforcement officers to organized crime. Transnational criminal groups are known to work closely with local groups to traffic cocaine, cannabis and arms. The main groups are Mexico's Sinaloa Cartel, the Italian 'Ndrangheta and members of the former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. Additionally, drug traffickers from other Central American countries, such as the Honduran Atlantic Cartel, have set up base in Costa Rica and used it as a hideout.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Carlos Alvarado Quesada was elected president in 2018 on an anti-corruption and organized crime platform, but aside from proposals to strengthen the national police, and to restrict gun control, details around his campaign were vague. The government has since launched a prevention strategy for public security and carried out mega-operations to combat crime, which it claims have helped reduce the homicide rate and crimes against property. The minister of public security also announced the strengthening of border police cooperation with Panama through the Latin American Police Cooperation Centre. Additionally, authorities promised to use a sizeable donation from China to purchase telecommunications and protection equipment for public force officers. The government is perceived as fairly transparent and the country is among the more stable in the world. Costa Rica also appears to have a strong legal and institutional framework against corruption, including an office established in 1948 to fight public service corruption and to promote ethics and transparency. In response to an increase in corruption cases, the judicial investigations agency(OIJ) established an anti-corruption office. Furthermore, Costa Rica has made efforts to combat corruption and bribery as part of a drive to join the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Costa Rica has signed and ratified a number of international instruments related to organized crime, drug and arms trafficking and environmental protection. It also has extradition treaties with countries including Colombia, the US, Spain, Nicaragua, Italy and Mexico, and bilateral

agreements to counter drug trafficking and money laundering with Argentina, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and the US. The latter in particular has been working closely with the Costa Rican government to secure borders, seize drugs, establish a judicial wire intercept programme (JWIP) and further train police. Costa Rica also has a number of laws aimed at tackling organized crime, human and drug trafficking, and terrorism financing. In addition, the legislative assembly has created the special jurisdiction of organized crime, with competence to investigate and prosecute serious crimes committed by people of legal age, although implementation issues are reported. Furthermore, the country has increased efforts to fight violence with the 'Sembremos Seguridad' security plan, indicating long-term dedication to fighting organized crime and violence through public policy and citizen engagement.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Costa Rica's judiciary comprises the Supreme, Appeals and District Courts. The country's prison system is under the remit of the Ministry of Justice and Peace, while the ombudsman is responsible for observing and scrutinizing prison conditions in the country. Prisons are overcrowded, primarily due to preventive detention, and the smuggling of cell phones or drugs by gangs in prisons is common. A system approved by the legislative assembly to block outgoing calls from prisons has yet to be installed because of COVID-19 movement restrictions.

The office of the public prosecutor determines the scope of investigations and the OIJ is responsible for criminal investigations. The OIJ and the national police are Costa Rica's main security agencies, as the country has no military. INTERPOL's National Central Bureau, part of the OIJ, and based in San José, is the main point of contact for foreign agencies collaborating with Costa Rican authorities. Additionally, the national police have a number of special units in charge of anti-narcotics operations, and although generally trusted, there have been cases of police involvement in drug trafficking. The borders, patrolled by the police border unit, are most affected by drug, arms and human trafficking as well as illegal mining and human smuggling. The air surveillance service has increased its capacity to control the country's airspace with additional radars and training, while the government expanded the use of the JWIP, resulting in more convictions for trafficking. Costa Rica is also a participant of the WCO Container Control Programme and collaborates with Panama and Nicaragua on border control strategies. In response to COVID-19, Costa Rica imposed restrictions on all foreign nationals entering the country, and enhanced police border presence. However, the border length and blind spots render effective border control difficult.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Costa Rica remains an important money-laundering hub, despite its money laundering laws, a technical commission for implementing and monitoring the national strategy and mechanisms to freeze terrorist funds and to train judges, prosecutors and judicial investigators. Money is primarily laundered through the construction industry, financial institutions, casinos and currency exchange houses. In addition, a recent increase in money laundering activities is attributed to the drug trade. There are concerns regarding authorities' capacity to halt drug trafficking syndicates from further infiltrating the legal economy.

Nonetheless, Costa Rica's economic environment is favourable for legal businesses, despite rising operating costs, a challenging legal environment and infrastructure deficiencies. Foreign direct investment is high, and it has been a significant economic growth contributor. Historically, international drug trade organizations have used Costa Rican citizens to facilitate the laundering of criminal proceeds via banks as well as other legitimate businesses in the country. However, a private American business initiative, the Business Alliance for Secure Commerce, has been established to promote safer international trade. Not least of all, loan sharking and other extortion-related practices have reportedly been on the rise in Costa Rica, with private persons as well as both legal and illegal businesses affected by them.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The two support mechanisms for victims and witnesses of crime are the victim and witness protection unit of the OIJ and the office of attention for crime victims of the public prosecution service. The latter also provides free and confidential protection to crime victims, as well as individual and group psychological care, social assistance, legal advice and referrals to social support networks and health care institutions. Costa Rica also has three main prevention programmes under the ministry of public security: a community security programme, a commercial security programme and a programme focused on the protection of children and adolescents. Most efforts to tackle organized crime are in collaboration with foreign governments or international organizations. Additionally, the Foundation for Peace and Democracy has been implementing a project to improve police capacity to prevent youth violence and criminal activity. Despite extremely high levels of media freedom, media ownership is concentrated in the hands of a limited number of people, limiting pluralism and diversity in the media landscape. Nevertheless, several international and private academic, advocacy and research institutes investigate security and organized crime related trends and issues.

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