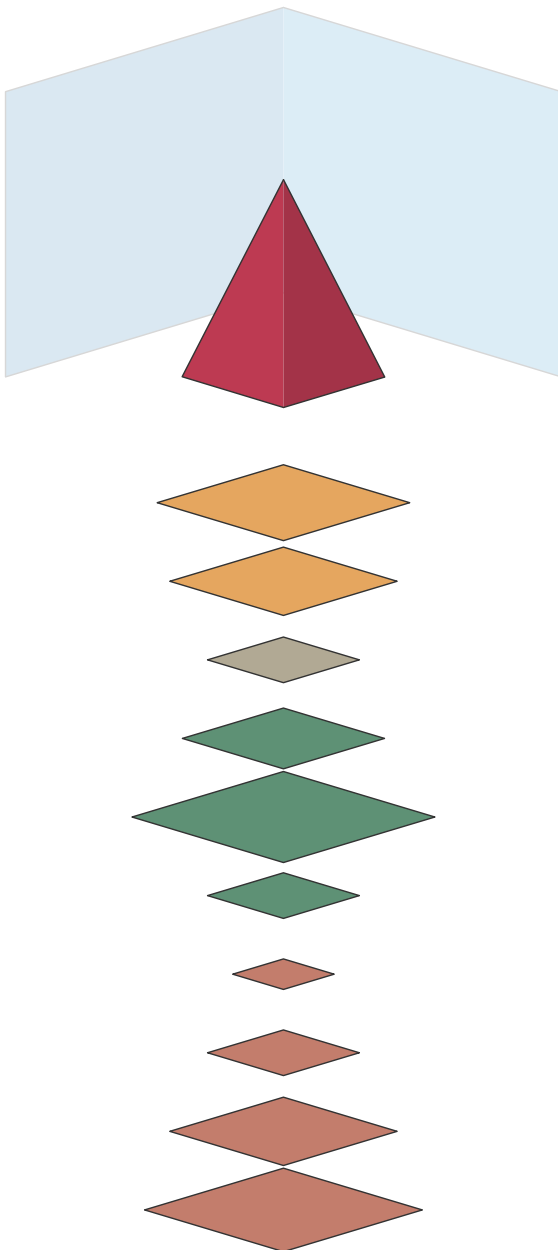


# JAPAN



## 4.53 CRIMINALITY SCORE

118<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
35<sup>th</sup> of 46 Asian countries  
4<sup>th</sup> of 5 Eastern Asian countries



### CRIMINAL MARKETS **4.05**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	4.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	3.00
FLORA CRIMES	4.00
FAUNA CRIMES	6.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	3.00
HEROIN TRADE	2.00
COCAINE TRADE	3.00
CANNABIS TRADE	4.50
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	5.50



### CRIMINAL ACTORS **5.00**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	6.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5.50
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	3.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	5.00



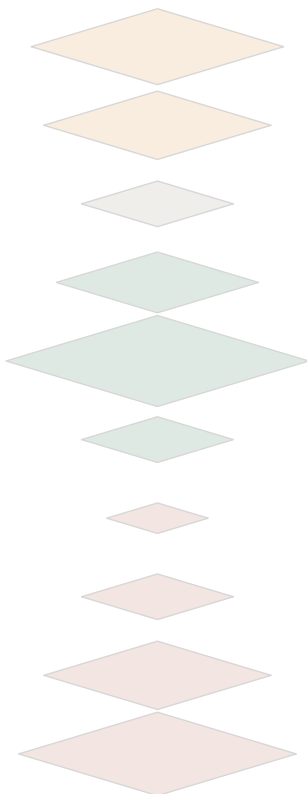
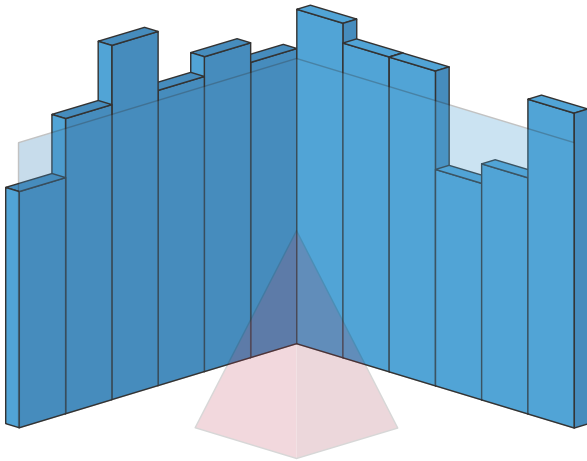
## 7.46 RESILIENCE SCORE

16<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
3<sup>rd</sup> of 46 Asian countries  
2<sup>nd</sup> of 5 Eastern Asian countries





# JAPAN



7.46

## RESILIENCE SCORE

16<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
3<sup>rd</sup> of 46 Asian countries  
2<sup>nd</sup> of 5 Eastern Asian countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	6.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	7.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	9.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	7.50
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	8.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	7.50
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	8.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	8.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	8.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	5.50
PREVENTION	6.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	8.00



4.53

## CRIMINALITY SCORE

118<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
35<sup>th</sup> of 46 Asian countries  
4<sup>th</sup> of 5 Eastern Asian countries



**CRIMINAL MARKETS** 4.05



**CRIMINAL ACTORS** 5.00



# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Japan is a destination, source and transit country for human trafficking, as well as a small-scale destination country for human smuggling. Migrant workers from various Asian countries who come in search of work in the informal sector are often subject to conditions of forced labour in Japan's construction, agriculture, manufacturing and mining sectors. Similarly, women and children from East Asia, South-eastern Asia, South America, Russia and Central America who initially undertake the journey to Japan for the purposes of employment or sham marriages are reported to be subsequently trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation or forced prostitution.

In addition to transnational trafficking, domestic trafficking has emerged as an issue in Japan. Most of the identified victims are women and children who have been forced into performing sexual services in order to pay off illegal loans. Human trafficking in Japan is a highly organized illicit economy in which sophisticated criminal networks, often transnational in nature, operate. Japan is also a transit country for people being trafficked from Eastern Asia to North America. Human smuggling, on the other hand, is generally facilitated by the Yakuza and Chinese Triads in the country, with Japan acting as a popular destination country for people travelling irregularly from China and other countries in the region.

### TRADE

Japan has among the lowest rates of gun crime in the world, largely due to strict restrictions on gun possession. Although Japan has an incredibly small domestic market for illicit arms, seizures of weapons from organized crime groups ('Boryokudan') are not uncommon, who smuggle arms into the country hidden among shipments of legal goods.

### ENVIRONMENT

As a large importer of wildlife products, Japan is vulnerable to becoming a destination country for flora and fauna crimes. Japan is a major consumer of wood-based products and imports more plywood from tropical forests than almost any other country. Many of Japan's timber imports come from regions with a known prevalence of illegal logging. Import regulations are lax, allowing illegally logged wood to make up a substantial amount of the country's timber imports.

Japan is also exposed to flows from criminal fauna markets. It has one of the world's largest markets for the ivory trade, which operates legally and in the open. Many criminal actors

use Japan to engage in so-called ivory laundering, whereby ivory is fraudulently declared as legal. At the same time, however, there is evidence that the market for ivory is in decline. There is also a significant demand for exotic pets on the Japanese market, and trade in threatened species – including slow lorises, otters, owls and pythons – is known to occur. Illegal pet markets in Japan are mainly supplied by Thailand, mainland China, Indonesia and Hong Kong. There are multiple risks associated with illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in Japan on both the demand and supply side of the consumer market. Domestic fishermen fish illegally in Japanese waters and then export their illicit catch, but fish caught illegally abroad is also imported into Japan. Japan is the world's largest consumer of high-value fish, such as bluefin tuna. Combined with lax traceability requirements, this appetite for seafood makes Japan vulnerable to importing large amounts of IUU seafood.

Non-renewable resource crimes are the least pervasive form of environmental crime in Japan, but there have been isolated cases of gold being smuggled into the country, primarily from Hong Kong and Taiwan, among other Asian countries, by criminal networks seeking to bypass taxes on the precious metal. Furthermore, identification documents required by gold traders to be able to reclaim taxes on gold purchased abroad are often forged.

### DRUGS

Japan is primarily a destination country for various drugs. For the most part, few drugs transit or are produced on Japanese territory. Domestic consumption is highest in cannabis and synthetic drugs, whereas heroin and cocaine consumption rates are low (particularly when compared with consumption rates in countries with similar income levels). Currently, the fastest growing and most lucrative drug market in Japan is the criminal market for methamphetamine. The price of methamphetamine in Japan is several times higher than it is in neighbouring countries, largely due to the high demand. Methamphetamine is smuggled into Japan primarily from Central and South America, the Middle East and South-eastern Asia, but in the last decade the African continent has been the source of much of the methamphetamine that has been seized, possibly due to a crackdown against Chinese suppliers.

Cannabis is also consumed on a relatively large scale in Japan, particularly by younger generations, and usage has increased substantially in recent years. With the exception of a handful of relatively small cannabis cultivation sites, almost all the illegal drugs consumed in Japan are imported from overseas and distributed on the local market by mafia-style criminal organizations.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

While all types of criminal actors have a presence in Japan, the criminal ecosystem of the country revolves around mafia-style actors. There are slightly more than two dozen designated mafia syndicates (legally referred to as the Boryokudan or Yakuza). The three largest, which account for approximately 70% of all syndicate members in Japan, are the Yamaguchi-gumi (accounting for 50% of all the Yakuza in Japan and subdivided into three factions, which are all rivals), the Sumiyoshi-kai and the Inagawa-kai. The different Yakuza are involved in various criminal markets to different extents. Some – the Yamaguchi-gumi, for instance – formally forbid their members from engaging in drug trafficking (although many do still operate in the drug markets), whereas other Boryokudan are heavily involved in the criminal market for drugs.

Overall, the various Boryokudan throughout Japan are engaged in criminal markets such as human smuggling, prostitution, arms and drug trafficking, illegal gambling and real estate. Boryokudan membership has decreased steadily over the past decade, although the number of arrests has

increased significantly. While the Yakuza have been in decline and increasingly ostracized by Japanese society, due in large part to the Yakuza exclusion ordinances that were enacted between 2010 and 2011, new groups operating under a looser and more decentralized structure have emerged. Sometimes referred to as the Hangure, these groups have partially filled the vacuum left by the Boryokudan, but also operate on a less professional basis and engage in more petty crime. However, they often operate with ruthless violence and engage in organized fraud.

Ties between organized criminals and Japanese politicians have been common for decades but have been reduced in recent years as public opinion on the Yakuza and organized crime in general has become increasingly intolerant. Nevertheless, in recent years, there have been a number of cases of high-ranking officials in the Liberal Democratic Party having ties to organized crime, and there are still accusations that cabinet members have associations with criminal actors. Foreign criminal actors and mafia-style groups with a presence in Japan include groups of West African and Chinese origin, who work together with the Yakuza.

## RESILIENCE

### LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Japan is a mature democracy with consolidated political, civil and personal liberties and high levels of stability. Nevertheless, the Japanese government lacks leadership on counter-trafficking and organized crime and often displays a reluctance to introduce legislation that would place tougher limits on criminal flows such as environmental crimes and human trafficking. The level of corruption in Japan is perceived to be fairly low, and levels of transparency are high. Nevertheless, while access to information legislation allows individuals to request information from government agencies, in practice the law has not always been implemented effectively. Furthermore, the Yakuza, who specialize in financial crime and fraud, frequently extort money from corporations and bribe politicians. While the level of social and political embeddedness of the Yakuza is being weakened, there is still progress to be made.

Japan is an active partner in the international architecture for countering organized crime and takes leadership in a number of areas of international cooperation. The Japanese police have recently enhanced cooperation with Europol and also host an INTERPOL National Central Bureau, regularly taking part in global INTERPOL-led police operations which focus on regional organized crime. Japan is an active and important donor in international development cooperation,

which is aimed at tackling illicit drugs, combating terrorism and strengthening law enforcement. Furthermore, Japan has either acceded to or ratified all relevant treaties and conventions pertaining to organized crime, including UNTOC, which was ratified in 2017, along with UNCAC. Domestically, Japan's legislative framework covers a wide range of organized crime types, including human smuggling, environmental crimes, money laundering and trafficking in people, drugs and arms. In 2020, the government set out plans to revise the country's tax framework in order to prevent gold from being smuggled into Japan. However, Japan's legal framework to counter human trafficking has some deficiencies. While it has criminalized sex and labour trafficking through various laws related to the prostitution of adults and children, child welfare, immigration and employment standards, Japan does not have a comprehensive anti-trafficking statute that includes definitions in line with international standards.

### CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Japan's judiciary is independent, efficient and reliable. Due process generally prevails in trials and the rule of law is strong. There are complaints about detention facilities, but in general the security and standards of prisons in Japan live up to global standards. Japan's national police

agency has a number of specialized bureaus and units working on organized crime. While these are effective, law enforcement agencies are faced with legal constraints that in some cases prevent intelligence-sharing with foreign nations in international drug investigations and make it difficult for the law enforcement agencies to proactively investigate members of transnational criminal organizations who operate inside the country. Japan sits on a maritime and air crossroads between Asia, the South Pacific and the Americas. This geographic location, compounded by Japan's extensive coastline and trade infrastructure, as well as the fact that it is one of the world's leading economies, make the country potentially attractive to local, regional and global organized crime groups.

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## **ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT**

Japan's economic and regulatory environment is conducive to private investment and makes it relatively easy to do business. Japan's organized crime groups still control a significant part of the country's private sector, particularly construction, but in general there are few constraints to private sector development and doing business.

Japan is increasingly vulnerable to money laundering and terrorist financing. It has adopted strong measures against these two issues, requiring all financial institutions to adopt risk-based approaches. Although the country does not have any major strategic deficiencies in its AML/CFT framework, the number of money laundering cases has increased significantly in recent years. One source of vulnerability is believed to be the relatively large number of internationally connected small or medium enterprises, whose overseas transactions can easily be disguised.

## **CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION**

Japanese authorities and NGOs provide some social protection services for victims of crimes such as human trafficking (including shelters, hotlines and counselling), as well as reintegration and repatriation services. Despite the existence of these services, more could be done to provide social protection for victims, and many foreign victims of human trafficking do not enjoy full access to all these services. Moreover, the government has been criticized for lacking the political will to adequately prevent human trafficking.

While in general the space for independent media is respected in Japan, whistle-blowers, journalists and bloggers can face prison if convicted of publishing information that has been classified as secret. Moreover, organized crime groups such as the Yakuza hold some influence over journalist communities. Social media, however, has become an increasingly important space for aggressive journalism.