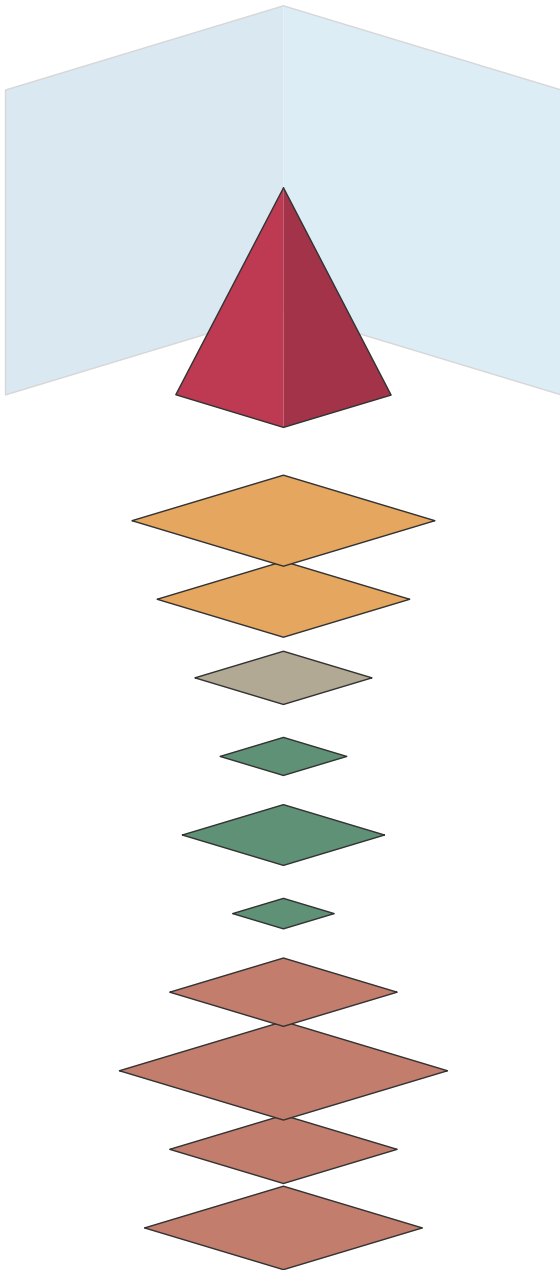


UNITED KINGDOM



4.89

CRIMINALITY SCORE

99th of 193 countries

17th of 44 European countries

4th of 11 Western European countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS

4.40

HUMAN TRAFFICKING 6.00

HUMAN SMUGGLING 5.00

ARMS TRAFFICKING 3.50

FLORA CRIMES 2.50

FAUNA CRIMES 4.00

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES 2.00

HEROIN TRADE 4.50

COCAINE TRADE 6.50

CANNABIS TRADE 4.50

SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE 5.50



CRIMINAL ACTORS

5.38

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS 4.00

CRIMINAL NETWORKS 6.50

STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS 3.00

FOREIGN ACTORS 8.00



7.88

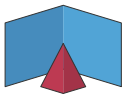
RESILIENCE SCORE

8th of 193 countries

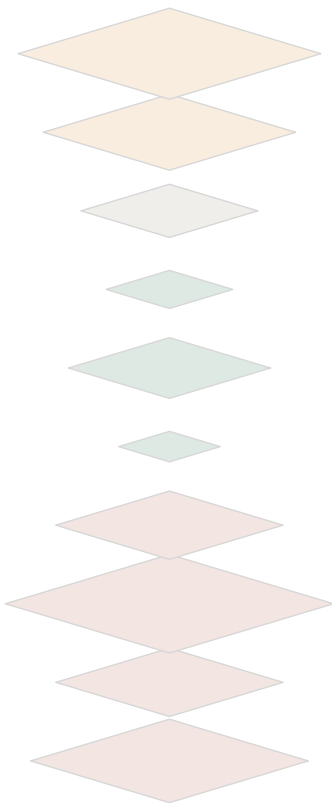
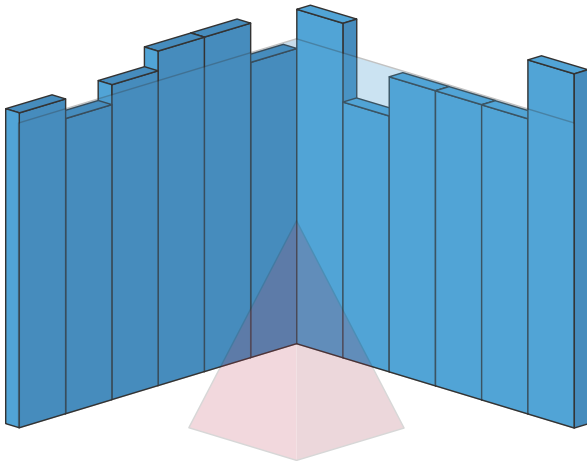
6th of 44 European countries

2nd of 11 Western European countries





UNITED KINGDOM



7.88

RESILIENCE SCORE

8th of 193 countries

6th of 44 European countries

2nd of 11 Western European countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE **8.00**

GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY **7.50**

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION **8.00**

NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS **8.50**

JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION **8.50**

LAW ENFORCEMENT **7.50**

TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY **8.50**

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING **6.50**

ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY **7.50**

VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT **7.50**

PREVENTION **7.50**

NON-STATE ACTORS **9.00**



4.89

CRIMINALITY SCORE

99th of 193 countries

17th of 44 European countries

4th of 11 Western European countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS **4.40**



CRIMINAL ACTORS **5.38**



CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Several forms of human trafficking are prevalent in the UK, victimizing foreign nationals from all across the world as well as British citizens. The two primary forms of trafficking perpetrated in the country are forced labour and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, which affect adults and children alike. Victims are forced to work in various economic sectors, both licit, such as agriculture, construction, textiles and domestic service, and illicit, notably within the drug trade. Indeed, the exploitation of youth in the so-called 'county lines' phenomenon – in which children and vulnerable adults are trafficked and exploited as drug couriers transporting crack cocaine and heroin from major cities to rural areas across the country – has continued to rise in recent years. Furthermore, the growth of online child sexual exploitation witnessed over the past decade is most likely to have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, the human trafficking illicit economy in the UK is highly organized, involving a range of foreign criminal groups as well as domestic criminal actors.

The UK is an important destination country for human smuggling but, although the human smuggling illicit industry may garner far greater attention in the media than does human trafficking, its criminal economy is not as widespread across the country. Moreover, it involves fewer sophisticated organized crime groups in the UK; the professionalization of the criminal market is largely limited to the activities taking place on the French side of the Channel. There do exist, however, domestic groups that either liaise with groups based in France and Belgium or directly organize the irregular crossings across the Channel. The number of individuals irregularly crossing the Channel in 2020 increased significantly from the previous year. While this may suggest an increased ability of smuggling networks to circumvent law enforcement efforts to clamp down on the crossings on both sides of the Channel, the increase is largely the manifestation of a displacement effect caused by the shutting down of formal channels through which individuals can seek asylum in the UK. The refugee resettlement scheme was paused in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, not resuming until the end of the year, which pushed migrants towards the use of smuggling networks instead.

TRADE

On the whole, the UK has among the lowest levels of firearm offences in the region and gun regulations in the country are extremely tight. Arms trafficking is not a particularly lucrative market in and of itself in the UK and, as such,

does not represent a major source of income for organized criminal groups. This notwithstanding, gun seizures have increased substantially over the past five years, with the most common source countries being other states in Europe, primarily in Central and Eastern Europe, often transiting through France, Belgium or the Netherlands. There are several distribution channels for arms trafficked into UK, primarily across the Channel but also via Northern Ireland. Furthermore, there is considerable overlap between the presence of illicit firearms and drug supply within the UK. A key feature of the illicit arms market in the country is the prevalence of modified, converted or reactivated firearms.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora crimes in the UK are extremely limited and, insofar as illegal activity related to flora species is carried out in the country – such as the illegal harvest by collectors of protected plant species, including rare orchids, for example –, it is not a consolidated, organized illicit economy. The UK does, however, play an important role as a transit and destination country for illicit flora species, with most seizures occurring at Heathrow Airport. Nevertheless, the volume of timber imports with high levels of probability of illegality in the supply chain is low and has been decreasing over the past decade. The illicit fauna market is similarly limited, but the UK does play a greater role as a transit and destination country for a wide range of illegal wildlife products, such as live birds, reptile parts and the more traditionally traded rhino, elephant and tiger products. While crimes against wildlife on UK soil, such as illegal hunting or illegal culling of badgers, are not uncommon, as with flora crimes, they are for the most part perpetrated by individuals on an ad hoc basis, rather than by organized criminal networks. Finally, most types of non-renewable-resource crimes are almost non-existent in the UK, with only a few isolated cases of gold theft and illicit export of precious metals. Nevertheless, the oil trade attracts a certain degree of criminality, primarily in Northern Ireland, where criminal groups have sought to commit excise fraud.

DRUGS

Drug trafficking remains a key component of the organized crime landscape in the UK, and drug use and drug-related deaths are at record levels. While drug-related harm affects all four nations of the UK, Scotland in particular is acutely affected by drug-related deaths, with one of the highest drug-related death rates in Europe. The UK has among the highest prevalence of cocaine users in Europe, and deaths related to cocaine use have increased significantly over the past decade. The majority of cocaine in the UK is supplied by the major global suppliers of Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador. The principal method of transportation of cocaine

to the UK is via maritime routes across the Atlantic, using Spain, Belgium or the Netherlands as the main transit hubs. The criminal groups involved in the cocaine market are highly organized and extremely professional, and foreign criminal groups have strengthened their foothold in the UK market in recent years, in particular Albanian organized crime groups.

While violence is limited in the market for powder cocaine, which is considered a largely middle-class drug, the crack cocaine market is far more violent and involves significant levels of exploitation on behalf of the criminal actors behind the illicit trade. A common feature of county-lines trafficking, whereby organized crime groups traffic drugs from major cities to smaller, often rural areas, is the exploitation of young and vulnerable individuals.

In addition to crack cocaine, the county-lines routes also supply heroin. The vast majority of imported heroin is derived from Afghan opium, with Pakistan often operating as a transit hub. The transport of heroin to the UK is then facilitated by well-established links between drug-trafficking organizations in the UK and those operating in source and transit countries. The heroin market is the largest drug market in the country in terms of the revenue generated, and heroin accounts for almost half of all deaths from drug abuse in the UK. As with cocaine, deaths related to heroin have also increased dramatically over the past decade.

While cannabis is the most frequently used and seized drug in the UK, the market does not experience anywhere near the same levels of violence and exploitation as the heroin and cocaine (particularly crack) markets. Nevertheless, the prevalence of illicit indoor cannabis farms has increased sharply over the past decade, a phenomenon that features considerable levels of exploitation in the form of forced labour. Despite increasing domestic cultivation, however, most cannabis in the country is imported, with Afghanistan and Morocco serving as the major source countries for cannabis resin, while cannabis herb is largely smuggled into the country from Southern African countries, the Caribbean and the Netherlands. With regard to synthetic drugs, the UK continues to be a major market for amphetamine and Ecstasy. The domestic synthetic drug market has seen considerable diversification in recent years, with the emergence of a variety of new psychoactive substances, many of which cause significant harm to users, not least 'Spice', a commonly used umbrella term for a whole host of different synthetic cannabinoids. Other synthetics, such as Fentanyl, are also increasingly prevalent in the UK.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

According to the National Crime Agency (NCA), there are over 350 000 individuals estimated to be involved in organized criminal activity in the UK, with just under 5 000 different organized crime groups thought to be operating in the country. Mafia-style groups are not particularly

pervasive in the UK, but there are several organized crime groups in some of the country's major cities that display a number of the key characteristics of such groups, including control of local territory and high levels of access to weapons. Nevertheless, such groups – traditionally family-based syndicates – have declined substantially over the past decades, with loose criminal networks playing a far greater role in the country's organized crime landscape. A prime example of the type of criminal networks dominating the scene in the UK is the drug-trafficking networks involved in the county-lines phenomenon. Most illicit economies in the country are, in fact, controlled by such networks: in particular, the human trafficking and smuggling markets, as well as the drug markets.

The most influential criminal-actor type in the UK, however, is foreign criminal actors. Aside from the monumental sums of money laundered through the City of London by foreign nationals, primarily Russian oligarchs, nearly all commodity-based illicit markets in the country feature, to differing degrees, the involvement of foreign actors. The cocaine market in the UK, for example, is largely controlled by Albanian organized crime groups, as is the illicit cannabis trade. The people-based crimes – human trafficking and human smuggling – are also largely perpetrated by foreign criminal actors, as these markets are largely facilitated by actors working in source and transit countries, whether across the Channel, in Eastern Europe, Eastern Asia, Latin America or Africa.

The prevalence and influence of state-embedded criminal actors in the UK is very low, and there is little to no evidence to suggest that organized criminality has infiltrated anywhere near the highest levels of the state apparatus. This notwithstanding, low-level corruption persists, and bribery of law enforcement officials does occur, both within the general police forces across the country and within border-control agencies. Furthermore, the increasingly close and opaque relationship between the government and Russian oligarchs may potentially be a cause for concern, particularly in light of the decision to elevate such an oligarch to the House of Lords.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The UK government is extremely vocal in its desire to tackle serious and organized crime, with significant focus placed on a number of different criminal markets, such as human trafficking, wildlife crime and the drug markets. The current government enjoys a high level of democratic legitimacy and governance across the country is robust. However, the government has still not raised the threat level posed by serious and organized crime to Tier 1 status, suggesting a failure to recognize the severity of the phenomenon; domestic corruption does not appear to be on its agenda; and the prevalence of Russian money has certainly been a blind spot in terms of the government's willingness to tackle potentially illicit finance. Access to information from the government has improved, but getting information from the court system is often extremely difficult. Furthermore, a number of events and actions taken by the government have considerably damaged the levels of government transparency and accountability in recent years. These include the unlawful prorogation of parliament in 2019; the extensive delay, and eventual content, of the Intelligence and Security Committee's 2020 Russia Report; and, most recently, the lack of transparency and apparent cronyism exposed amid the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to public procurement contracts.

The UK's international cooperation framework on matters pertaining to organized crime is extremely robust, with considerable mutual legal assistance and asset recovery in operation. The country has a good liaison network in place and has historically been an extremely proactive collaborator with international law enforcement agencies such as INTERPOL. Overall, from an organized crime perspective, the UK clearly understands the importance of working internationally. However, an acrimonious departure from the EU appears to have soured relations with its continental partners quite substantially, which may prove problematic in the future. Furthermore, although most security arrangements with the EU remained in place throughout 2020 as part of the transition period arrangements – such as cooperation with EUROPOL, the European Arrest Warrant and access to numerous crucial databases – international cooperation frameworks will inevitably be weaker in the post-Brexit era.

Domestically, the legislative framework pertaining to organized crime is one of the most robust in the world, covering a significant number of organized crime types, including human trafficking, firearms trafficking, environmental crime and the illicit drug markets. Indeed, the UK's human trafficking legislation is often considered one of the most advanced in the world. Overall, the UK is fairly innovative with regard to organized crime legislation, is effective at devising strategies and, on the

whole, takes a very coordinated approach to tackling organized crime. However, it could be argued that the executive has overused its power to pass domestic laws, and the saturation of the lawbooks comes with a cost to the effectiveness of legislation already in place. Moreover, certain forms of organized crime are often politicized, most notably the issue of human smuggling, which has resulted in legislation that is deemed to unfairly target vulnerable people. Finally, the UK's approach to drug markets is one of complete criminalization, as evidenced most recently by the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016, with little evidence to suggest it has been effective in limiting the scope and scale of the illicit drug markets in the country.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

While, in a global context, the UK's criminal justice system is among the most advanced and effective, highly independent and free from the capture of organized criminal actors, chronic underfunding of both the judicial system and law enforcement has significantly reduced the effectiveness with which organized crime can be addressed. UK courts have been hit by funding cuts over the course of the past decade, which have led to substantial backlogs within the system that have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, while the NCA has extremely competent officers and a very wide remit to lead and support law enforcement actions at the local, national and international levels, severe under-resourcing has limited its effectiveness relative to the threat posed by organized crime in the country. Staff turnover at the NCA, particularly within the anti-corruption department, is very high, with many staff members being lost to the private sector. While the government has committed to increasing the number of police officers, this would simply be a (partial) reversal of the cuts made to the police force since 2010. While the NCA is highly proficient in tackling certain forms of organized criminal activity, there are a number of areas in which it is fairly weak, in particular in proportion to the severity of the threat, such as financial fraud and money laundering, among others. Furthermore, police capacity to investigate domestic corruption is very limited.

With regard to the country's territorial integrity, the UK's characteristics as an island state make it easier, relatively speaking, to exert an effective border-security regime. However, the UK is in a precarious situation in this regard and the country's future is uncertain, both as a result of the push for Scottish independence, which appears to have gathered momentum in the wake of Brexit and the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the post-Brexit border arrangements between Northern

Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The risk of renewed conflict in Northern Ireland, coupled with the increased risk of illicit trade as a consequence of any regulatory divergence from the EU, pose, and will continue to pose, a problem to the UK's territorial integrity.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The UK is a global financial centre with an extremely open business environment. The ease with which one can establish a business in the country is a key factor in the relative lack of motivation to operate in the informal sectors. However, these strengths also leave the country vulnerable to financial secrecy, money laundering and other forms of economic crime. Companies House is a prime example of how policies and institutions designed to reduce regulations and facilitate the ease of doing business can, in fact, facilitate astronomical levels of financial fraud. The government has, however, committed to reform Companies House in the coming years. On paper, the UK has an extremely robust anti-money laundering framework, with advanced anti-money laundering legislation that exceeds international standards. In practice, the recovery of illicit funds remains sporadic and largely ineffective. Overall, the UK is a global hub for money laundering and illicit finance and, although certain policy announcements over the past year are a move in the right direction – such as the so-called 'Magnitsky Act' sanctions regime – there remains a severe lack of transparency and enforcement of existing legislation, underlining an apparent lack of political will to tackle the issue.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

A number of campaigns are in place in the UK to raise public awareness of various forms of organized crime, not least human trafficking. On the whole, the UK's prevention frameworks with regard to criminal markets are fairly robust, and prevention is a key component of many a government strategy on organized crime, as well as terrorism and violent crime, among others. However, the resources provided often do not match the rhetoric. The government's performance in the prevention of white-collar crime is poor. The government has also been extremely vocal, particularly on social media, in its criticism of irregular migration across the Channel, which is presented with a heavy focus on preventing the smuggling operations of criminal gangs. However, the UK's border policy does not appear to align with the government's stated objective of preventing human smuggling, particularly throughout 2020, given the displacement effect of the decision to reduce legal migration channels causing an increased reliance on smuggling networks.

In regard to victim and witness support, the measures in place in the UK are robust by global standards, but in certain areas are notably inadequate proportionate to the needs of the victims. Specifically, while funding for human

trafficking support services has increased in recent years, overall resources are still considered inadequate, and the National Referral Mechanism is widely criticized in terms of the treatment of foreign victims of human trafficking and prosecutions of trafficking victims. Furthermore, the UK's approach to drug use is highly prohibitionist and harm-reduction measures for supporting people who use drugs are fairly limited, although variations do exist between the devolved nations.

On the whole, UK civil society is extremely robust on the topic of organized crime. While the traditional print media are highly partisan, the UK is home to a huge number of high-quality independent journalists investigating and reporting on issues pertaining to organized criminal activity. Furthermore, academics and think tanks are highly engaged on this topic, particularly on such issues as corruption and the drug markets. Non-governmental organizations working on human trafficking, especially those providing support to victims, are also numerous.

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