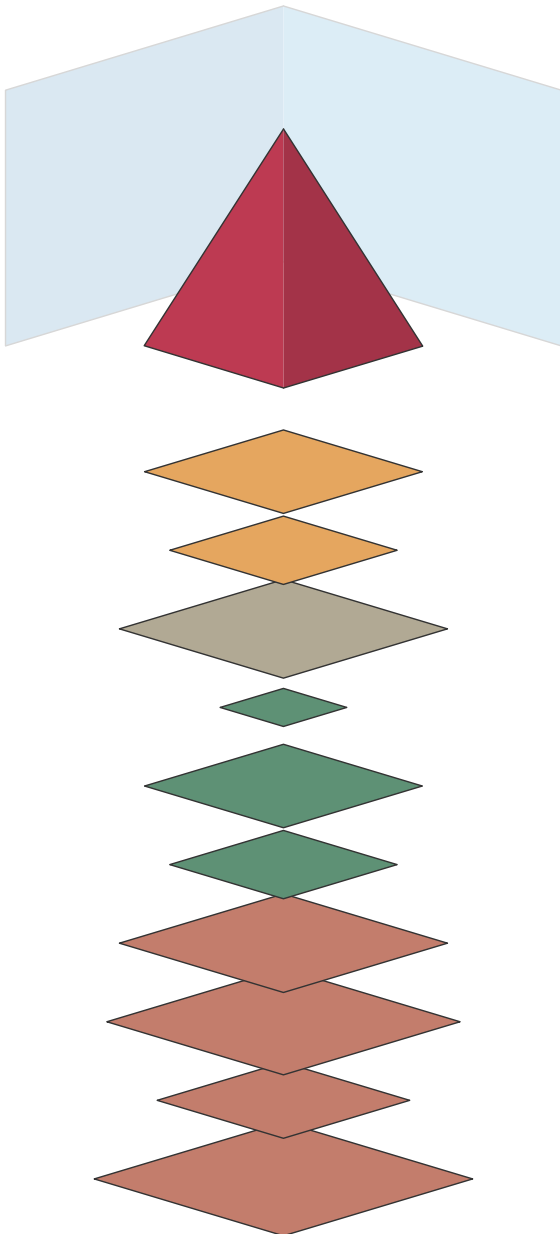




# UNITED STATES



## 5.50 CRIMINALITY SCORE

66<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
15<sup>th</sup> of 35 American countries  
1<sup>st</sup> of 2 North American countries



### CRIMINAL MARKETS **5.50**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	4.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	6.50
FLORA CRIMES	2.50
FAUNA CRIMES	5.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	4.50
HEROIN TRADE	6.50
COCAINE TRADE	7.00
CANNABIS TRADE	5.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	7.50



### CRIMINAL ACTORS **5.50**

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



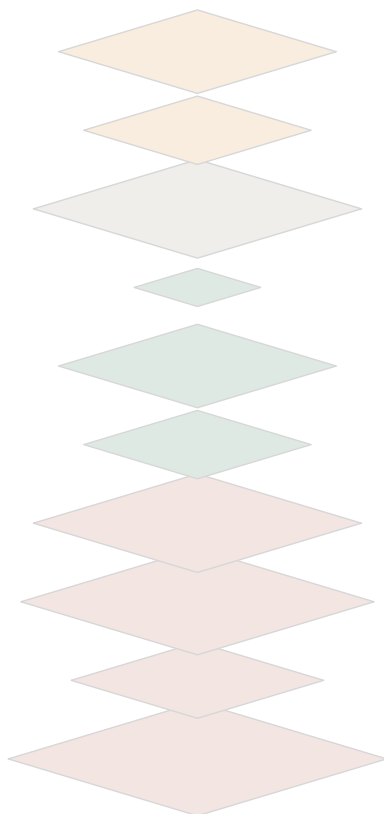
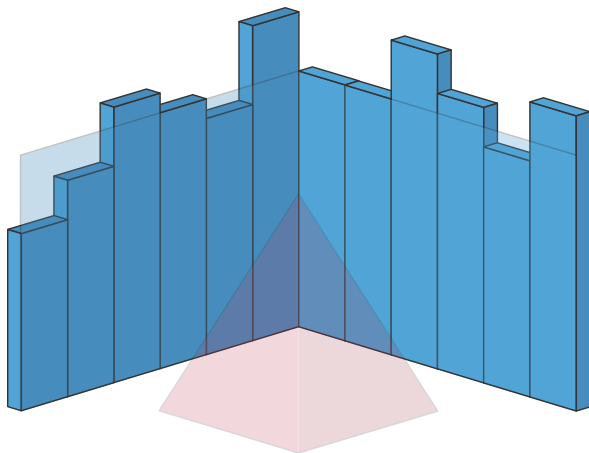
## 6.58 RESILIENCE SCORE

28<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
3<sup>rd</sup> of 35 American countries  
2<sup>nd</sup> of 2 North American countries





# UNITED STATES



**6.58**

## RESILIENCE SCORE

28<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries

3<sup>rd</sup> of 35 American countries

2<sup>nd</sup> of 2 North American countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	4.50
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	5.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	7.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.50
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	6.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	8.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	6.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	6.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	8.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	7.00
PREVENTION	6.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	7.50



**5.50**

## CRIMINALITY SCORE

66<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries

15<sup>th</sup> of 35 American countries

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**CRIMINAL MARKETS** 5.50



**CRIMINAL ACTORS** 5.50



# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

The US has one of the largest human trafficking markets worldwide in absolute terms. Forced labour primarily occurs in the construction, domestic service, beauty and agricultural sectors, while sex trafficking largely applies to escort services, pornography and outdoor solicitation. Most victims are from the US, Mexico and the Philippines, and perpetrators are usually members of organized networks. The market targets vulnerable groups, including children in the child-welfare and juvenile-justice systems, homeless youth, unaccompanied non-citizen children without lawful immigration status, drug users, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer individuals, victims with disabilities, Native American women and girls, and migrant labourers. Although it may be too early to ascertain the full impact of COVID-19 on human trafficking, vulnerability to both sexual and labour exploitation increased considerably amid the pandemic as people spent more time online (in particular children unable to attend school) and as the economic damage caused by lockdown restrictions took its toll on workers in already precarious situations.

Human smuggling into the US is consolidated along the south-west border, involving domestic and foreign criminal networks, as well as state-embedded actors. Individuals from Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador are increasingly the focus of Mexican smuggling operations into the US, sometimes resulting in fatalities. Criminal organizations charge smuggling networks that pass through smuggling corridors. Payments are also received by corrupt low-level officials, including Mexican police, migration officers and US border-patrol agents. Notably, there is little evidence of drug-trafficking organizations engaging in human smuggling. While the COVID-19 pandemic caused some initial disruptions to smuggling networks at the Mexico border, there is little evidence to suggest a major decline in the human smuggling market throughout 2020 on the whole. On the contrary, if unemployment rates in common source countries rise due to the pandemic, it is likely that human smuggling will increase in volume in the near future.

### TRADE

The US is the world's biggest exporter of arms, and is a source and destination for difficult-to-purchase firearms, including machine guns. The civilian right to bear arms is constitutionally protected in the US and ownership is widespread. The legal purchase of guns is relatively easy in some states; these are then transported, resold or trafficked to states or countries with stricter gun-control laws.

Despite the liberal gun laws that make access to firearms relatively easy, the US nevertheless hosts a significant black market for weapons. Moreover, US foreign trade and support often takes the form of military and arms-related support, furthering global dissemination. Most firearms seized and traded in Mexico are purchased in south-west US border states, and the US is also the biggest source of illegal foreign guns in Brazil. Weapons legally and illegally exported from the US are obtained by armed gangs, drug traffickers and terrorist organizations, fuelling conflict, shootings, suicides, homicides, as well as drive-by, law enforcement, unintentional and mass shootings. Growing distrust of US law enforcement has also led to increased gun violence.

### ENVIRONMENT

The US is the main source, destination and transit hub for illegal flora and fauna in the region. The US exports protected species such as Pachypodium and Guaiacum, and plays a concerning role as a hub for the trading of the endangered Aquilaria tree species native to South-eastern Asia. Although illegal logging is not widespread, the US is a large importer from regions with high illegal logging rates. With regard to fauna, illegal imports include ivory, rhino horn, narwhal tusk, shark fins, turtles and reptiles. Additionally, the US is the main market for species illegally harvested in Latin America, including parrots, reptiles, molluscs, monkeys and frogs. Domestic wildlife crimes target mountain lions, bobcats, rattlesnakes and paddlefish eggs. A large percentage of wildlife products entering the US with documentation have laundered or illegal origins. The number of US Fish and Wildlife Service enforcement officers has not kept pace with trafficking, and once illegal specimens arrive, there is no comprehensive federal or state agency to supervise, inspect and stop domestic trade.

Illicitly extracted gold, often transiting Miami on small planes, constitutes part of a larger illegal mining market in Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru and Guyana for silver, copper, coltan, iron, coal, emeralds and uranium. Illegal gold is legalized with falsified paperwork and then sold to US or international refineries selling gold bars to US-based multinational corporations. Since gold bullion is classified as a commodity, once imported, treasury department reporting requirements and customs duties do not apply, hampering anti-money laundering efforts. Lastly, as organized criminal groups in Mexico have diversified, stolen fuel has skyrocketed over the past decade, an important proportion of which is sold in the US (in addition to fuel stolen domestically by criminal gangs in the US itself).

## DRUGS

The US drug markets are all among the largest in the world. Cannabis is the most commonly used illicit drug in the US, and the country is both a source and destination for cannabis. While illegal under federal law, states have different regulations regarding possession, use and cultivation. Most cannabis is illicitly produced domestically by drug-trafficking organizations or by state-licensed growers. The illicit market is supplied by illegal, domestically produced cannabis; diverted domestic, state-approved cannabis; and foreign-produced cannabis trafficked into the US, mainly from Mexico and, to a lesser extent, Canada and the Caribbean. However, the quality of Mexican and Caribbean cannabis is considered inferior to that produced in the US and Canada.

Synthetic opioids generally dominate the US market, with profits mostly being accrued by foreign actors, including Mexican mafia-style groups. Methamphetamine use has skyrocketed in the US in recent years, and primarily originates in Mexico as a low-cost, high-purity and high-potency alternative to that in the US. Synthetic cannabinoids, cathinones and precursors are mostly trafficked into the US by Chinese networks. Illicit Fentanyl and other synthetic opioids are the most lethal opioids used in the US. One of the biggest market impacts is the increase in lethal overdoses involving synthetic opioids and psychostimulant drug poisoning. Although law enforcement agencies are dedicated to combating the market, dark-net Fentanyl and social media transactions are extensive.

Although heroin has largely been displaced by opioids such as Fentanyl, seizures of the drug have increased, especially on the south-west border, and the mixing of heroin with Fentanyl is common. The US heroin market primarily involves Mexican heroin, and mafia-style groups control smuggling routes across the south-west border. The trade also contributes to territorial struggles between gangs. Thousands of deaths in the US are attributed annually to heroin overdoses, increasingly due to high potency and the mixing of heroin or cocaine with Fentanyl. High disease rates have also resulted from shared syringes, and there is a relationship between the opioid crisis and the rise in numbers of children in foster care. The availability of cocaine has increased in recent years due to record levels of coca cultivation and cocaine production in Colombia, the primary source of US cocaine, which mostly enters via the south-west border through Mexican networks. In the main, domestic street gangs control retail-level distribution.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

Drug trafficking groups, mainly networks and gangs, dominate the attention of US investigators and prosecutors. There are thousands of active gangs nationwide, whose activities focus on drug, arms and human trafficking. Most use violence and work alongside foreign drug trafficking networks. Despite a decrease in activity, mafia-style groups

continue to operate in the US, including five major family groups descending from the Cosa Nostra Sicilian mafia, all of which exert substantial control in New York, southern New Jersey and Philadelphia. Collectively, Cosa Nostra has thousands of US-based members and associates involved in illegal markets, including heroin trafficking, money laundering and healthcare fraud targeting the Medicare programme. These groups have significant access to weapons and carry arms openly. Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs, of which there are several hundred operating across the country, are the archetypal mafia-style group in the US. The gangs are highly transnational in nature and are predominantly involved in the drug trafficking market, particular cross-border trafficking.

There are many foreign actors involved in organized crime activities affecting the US. Cybercrimes – particularly identity, financial and election fraud – often have their source in Eastern Europe and Asia. Latin American criminal organizations are involved in US drug markets (as conduits between source countries and the wholesalers in the US, as opposed to directly on US soil), as are African, Asian, Eurasian, and Middle Eastern criminal organizations. Asian and Balkan criminal organizations are also involved in human smuggling and trafficking. Foreign actors may exert economic and financial power in the US, attempting to influence presidential elections by focusing on so-called swing states and assisting in the production of polarizing rallies. Government corruption may also be on the rise, although investigations and prosecutions have been declining. Some in former president Donald Trump’s inner circle were convicted on federal charges of money laundering and other illicit activities, and Trump himself was accused of engaging with mafia-style groups before taking office.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Despite presenting a strong public position against organized crime, former president Trump was impeached in 2019. Although acquitted, this was accompanied by allegations of Russian election interference, and the challenging of 2020 election results furthered political division. President Joe Biden has pledged to modernize the immigration system and tackle root causes; such policy changes could impact crime dynamics on the southern border. In the last decade, the US has been militarily involved in conflicts, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Libya and Niger, and tensions exist with North Korea, Iran and China. The COVID-19 pandemic has also exposed many structural failings, and public support for government has declined due to issues regarding transparency, accountability, corporate regulation, agency leadership, candidate screening and training. Oversight is at its weakest in decades. Despite the treasury department's fiscal service, access to information is considered moderate. The federal nature of the US political system is such that the quality of legislation and regulatory frameworks for transparency and disclosure differ vastly between states.

The US is a signatory to international agreements related to organized crime, corruption and environmental protection. Nonetheless, the Trump administration withdrew from a number of international treaties. The US has a number of extradition and mutual legal-assistance treaties, but relations with Mexico, previously marked by relatively easy extradition processes, appear to have changed. The US legal framework criminalizes organized-criminal acts, such as human smuggling, human trafficking, goods produced through forced labour, drugs trafficking and some environmental crimes. Laws cover the investigation, arrest, prosecution, adjudication and punishment of perpetrators, especially for drug trafficking, a federal and state-level felony. However, there is no federal arms trafficking law in the US, which is the primary facilitator of gunrunning across state lines.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The US has the largest reported incarcerated population globally. Concerns regarding overcrowding, basic needs, deaths in custody and the need for greater capacity in terms of medical, mental-health and substance-abuse care have been reported. Prison gangs are abundant, particularly in California but also in Texas, including the Texas Syndicate, Mexikanemi, Barrio Azteca and Tango Blast among others. The judicial system appears to be hampered by the election of many lower-level judges and the political nature of many judicial appointments. A number of agencies working within the Department of Justice and

the Department of Homeland Security focus on organized crime at the federal level. A Department of State (DoS) bureau also specifically focuses on organized crime, and the US is one of few countries in the region that has a federal agency specifically focused on guns, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The reported budget increase for Customs and Border Protection (CBP) may indicate the prioritization of fighting organized crime, and state and local-level law enforcement agencies have also been allocated increasingly high resources. Nevertheless, concerns exist about unqualified agency leadership, poor candidate screening, insufficient training and an erosion of trust in law enforcement, due in part to police killings.

The US shares land borders with Canada and Mexico. Although the US–Canada border is the longest international border in the world, the US–Mexico border is more challenging to police. The CBP, whose mission is to prevent human smuggling and contraband, is in charge of monitoring the country entry points. However, their efforts are still circumnavigated by criminal networks and many experts argue that the strengthening of barriers at the southern border strengthens the hand of organized criminal organizations by simply making the smuggling, which does not stop as a result of enhanced border security, more expensive.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The global dominance of US currency and the number of transactions through US banks creates money-laundering vulnerability, particularly in relation to fraud, drug trafficking, human smuggling, human trafficking and corruption. Despite effective measures, considerable money laundering and terrorist financing risks still exist. Towards the end of 2020, the US was on the cusp of implementing the most significant changes to its anti-money laundering framework in decades, supported by both main political parties, including, crucially, compulsory registration of beneficial owners.

The regulatory framework has significant gaps related to vigilance, which changes with agency leadership and political will. US property rights are guaranteed, although protections have been uneven. The DoS is responsible for building a strong economy while considering national security regulations. Although regulatory capacity is not considered an issue, challenges persist with regard to the political will to empower and encourage adequate oversight.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

US victim and witness support are robust, with the contribution of thousands of non-state and government service providers, as well as the DoS Office to Monitor and

Combat Trafficking in Persons. A robust state framework provides support to modern slavery victims, and an active national media contributes to effective victim- and witness-support efforts. Civil society organizations also provide crime-prevention strategies and environmental protection, spurred by initiatives such as the National Crime Prevention Council. Governmental drug trafficking elimination efforts recently adopted a prevention focus, investing in treatment and the provision of alternative pain medication. The US has among the most developed mass media in the world, with more than a thousand daily newspapers, four major commercial television networks, and a 24-hour rolling news service that report on state efforts to combat organized crime. The Trump administration, however, employed rhetoric attacks targeting media. Lethal attacks on journalists and media houses have also been reported. Overall, the media environment was undoubtedly rendered significantly more fragile during the course of the Trump administration.

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