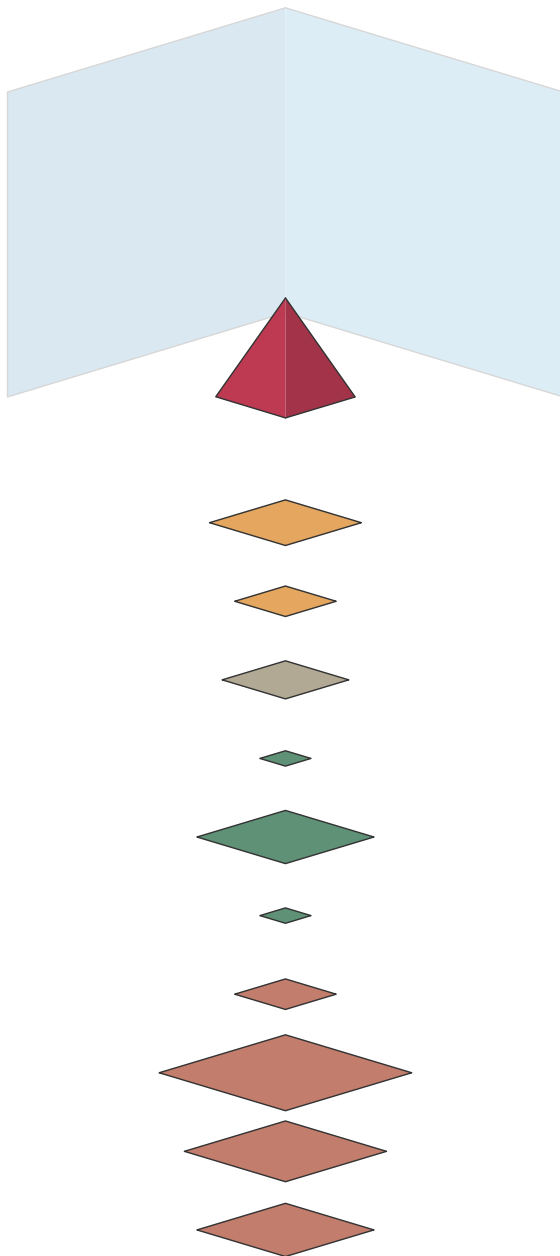


# URUGUAY



2.69

## CRIMINALITY SCORE

182<sup>nd</sup> of 193 countries

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

12<sup>th</sup> of 12 South American countries



## CRIMINAL MARKETS

2.75

HUMAN TRAFFICKING 3.00

HUMAN SMUGGLING 2.00

ARMS TRAFFICKING 2.50

FLORA CRIMES 1.00

FAUNA CRIMES 3.50

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES 1.00

HEROIN TRADE 2.00

COCAINE TRADE 5.00

CANNABIS TRADE 4.00

SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE 3.50



## CRIMINAL ACTORS

2.63

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS 1.50

CRIMINAL NETWORKS 4.50

STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS 2.00

FOREIGN ACTORS 2.50



7.75

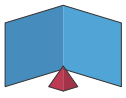
## RESILIENCE SCORE

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

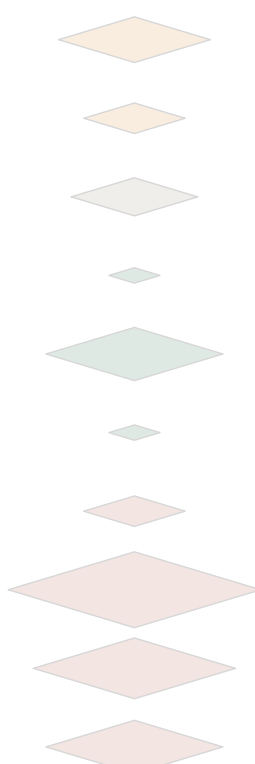
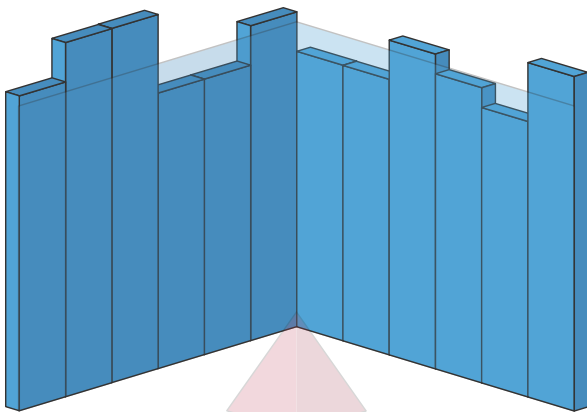
1<sup>st</sup> of 35 American countries

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# URUGUAY



7.75

## RESILIENCE SCORE

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

1<sup>st</sup> of 35 American countries

1<sup>st</sup> of 12 South American countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	8.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	9.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	9.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	7.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	7.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	8.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	7.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	7.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	8.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	7.50
PREVENTION	7.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	8.50



2.69

## CRIMINALITY SCORE

182<sup>nd</sup> of 193 countries

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**CRIMINAL MARKETS**

2.75



**CRIMINAL ACTORS**

2.63



# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Uruguay is a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking, primarily in the form of sexual exploitation. Many of those working in legal prostitution venues are trafficking victims. Permeable borders with Argentina and Brazil facilitate trafficking, and workers are subjected to forced labour in construction, domestic and cleaning services, elderly care, wholesale stores, textile and timber industries, agriculture, and fishing. Victims are mainly from Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, and other South American countries. Impoverished Uruguayan families also abet the exploitation of children in prostitution, as well as domestic and agricultural servitude in rural areas. The majority of convicted perpetrators are Uruguayan citizens. Uruguayan women, girls, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) individuals are also forced into prostitution abroad, in Spain, Italy, the US, Argentina, and Brazil, among other countries.

Human smuggling appears negligible, as Uruguay shares porous borders with Argentina and Brazil, and crossing without documentation is common. Nonetheless, the economic crises in Cuba and Venezuela have resulted in the proliferation of smuggling networks providing accommodation, transfers and papers in the region. Individuals smuggled from Cuba usually arrive in Uruguay via Guyana and Brazil. The smuggling of Chinese nationals into Argentina via Uruguay has also been reported.

### TRADE

Uruguay is a destination country for illegal weapons, primarily from Brazil. Arms trafficking has increased in recent decades due to high local demand, but there are few cases of reported corruption, and these usually involve the police or army. A lack of harmonized gun regulations across the various countries in the region has generated an increased demand for trafficked weapons in the country, notably from Brazil. The illicit trade in arms has resulted in an increase in the killing of Uruguayan police, who are robbed or killed by criminals trying to get their firearms.

### ENVIRONMENT

Uruguay has effective state control over crimes involving non-renewable resources, and as a major exporter of agricultural products, it has comparatively strict controls on the import and export of flora and fauna. The illegal flora trade is negligible because of a lack of biodiversity, and the illegal fauna market also appears small. Nonetheless, dozens

of reptile, arachnid, insect, mammal and bird species are seized monthly, including the endangered yellow cardinal. Most exotic animals enter Uruguay from Brazil and Paraguay, and there are reports of escaped jaguars being purchased on the black market. Notably, cattle, horse and sheep theft by small local criminal groups has been increasing. This is a critical issue for an economy reliant on agricultural exports as thefts effectively discourage the business, particularly those working with sheep. Additionally, widespread illegal fishing in Uruguayan waters is facilitated by the navy's lack of patrol vessels.

### DRUGS

Although there is a legal market, Uruguay is a source, transit and destination country for illegal cannabis. Consumption is high compared to other countries in the region, and it is on the rise. A large proportion of locally consumed cannabis is supplied by criminal organizations via the black market, and is associated with a rise in homicides and violence. Before legalization, the market was dominated by Paraguayan networks. Although some still buy cannabis illegally, prices have adapted to the new legal market and most consumers who illegally purchase cannabis do so through immediate social networks of home growers. There are some small-scale networks of unregistered growers; the national police are aware of these and break up any attempts to export cannabis from Uruguay. Nevertheless, due to its high quality, legally produced cannabis is still trafficked to neighbouring countries. However, since the Uruguayan market is small, it is unlikely that this will become a significant problem.

While cannabis use is far more prevalent in Uruguay, cocaine and coca paste constitutes the biggest drug market with regard to seizures. Nevertheless, the domestic market for cocaine is quite small, and foreign traffickers take advantage of Uruguay's porous borders with Argentina and Brazil, often using Montevideo as a logistical hub for drug-transit activities to Europe. Moreover, criminal organizations from Colombia, Mexico, Brazil and Russia are currently operating in Uruguay. A recent rise in homicides has been connected to clashes between drug-trafficking gangs aiming to control neighbourhoods, territories and trafficking routes.

By comparison the heroin trade in Uruguay is not substantial compared to the domestic market for cannabis and cocaine. However, Uruguay is a destination country for synthetic drugs, and although overall consumption is low, their use is growing. Ecstasy, primarily produced in Brazil, is considered expensive and is largely consumed by middle-to-high-income individuals.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

There is minimal evidence of mafia-style groups operating within Uruguay. Instead, organized crime is predominantly characterized by small family clans operating as loose criminal networks in the peripheries of major cities, the most well known being Los Chingas and Los Kamalas. The former is involved in drug trafficking, robberies and cattle rustling. Although comparatively rare, extortion, kidnappings, and planned attacks against government officials and property do occur, and clashes between criminals over territorial control are increasing. While organized-criminal organizations from a number of Latin American countries operate in Uruguay, it is not a hub for their operations. The main foreign actor is Primeiro Comando da Capital, which

has increasingly been trafficking cocaine and cannabis. Brazilian criminal actors are prominent in border towns, where they collaborate with Uruguayan members to conduct smuggling, drug trafficking and cattle rustling. The Mexican criminal organization Los Cuinis is also active in Uruguay, concentrated primarily in Montevideo and Canelones.

Although police and customs corruption exists, incidents of low-level corruption appear minimal, and the police are ranked among the most trustworthy institutions in the country. Uruguay has one of the strongest judicial systems in the hemisphere and violators are generally punished, with no evidence of state actors systematically facilitating or engaging in criminal activity.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Uruguay is a democratic, constitutional republic with a relatively robust state, strong political parties, a participative citizenry and high levels of institutionalization. The democratic process and state services are largely free from criminal influence and the government has declared a strong counter-organized crime stance, with rhetoric effectively translating into policy. The ministry of the interior's budget and its personnel number have also increased substantially. Although corruption is low, party financing is insufficiently regulated. However, public-body transparency is promoted by law, and the fundamental right to access government information is guaranteed. The board of transparency and public ethics promotes public policies, regulations and actions that strengthen state transparency, advises the judiciary and public administration on corruption issues, and receives and safeguards the legal declarations of public officials.

Uruguay has ratified international agreements related to organized crime, corruption, drugs, arms, and flora and fauna. The country's legalization of cannabis, however, contravenes one of these conventions. Uruguay also has domestic laws related to money laundering, drug trafficking and production, weapons, human trafficking, victim protection, and cross-border organized crime. The attorney general's office investigates and prosecutes crimes related to child trafficking and exploitation. State agencies in charge of issues related to migration and intelligence, INTERPOL, the national anti-drug brigade and the national police, as well as the ministry of interior in collaboration with the republican guard, a so-called militarized police force, are all involved in the fight against organized crime. Cooperation with INTERPOL and other law-enforcement agencies is strong, and INTERPOL's

National Central Bureau in Montevideo plays an important role in countering trafficking and preserving national and regional security. Uruguay has extradition agreements with Argentina, Canada, Chile, Ecuador, the US, Mexico, Paraguay and Venezuela, and has taken steps to change its reputation as a tax haven. However, legislation regarding the trafficking of motor vehicles, a significant problem in the country, is lacking.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The Uruguayan prison system suffers from overcrowding, poor living conditions, high recidivism, violence, torture and impunity. Although criminal groups do not exert significant control over prisons, criminal operations, such as drug trafficking, occur. Nonetheless, several prosecutor's offices specialize in organized crime and appear to be effective, although they lack resources. Uruguay also has strong laws and internal regulations that govern police interactions. The national police, however, face difficulties providing basic safety, in part due to lack of sufficient training. The Ministry of the Interior oversees public security, along with the republican national guard, an elite police force considered well equipped and trained.

Although not a drug-producing country, foreign traffickers exploit Uruguay's porous borders with Argentina and Brazil. Drug trafficking in Uruguay has increased, perhaps due to Brazil's militarization and zero-tolerance approach. Nonetheless, little evidence suggests that criminal organizations control parts of the border. To support the police, the government has authorized military surveillance, patrolling, identification of persons, vehicle control and criminal detention in border areas, but structural challenges

within the air force and navy, such as inoperable planes and a lack of radars and vessels, compromise territorial integrity.

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*This summary was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State. The opinions, findings and conclusions stated herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.*

## **ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT**

Although traditionally considered a tax haven, Uruguay has made several regulatory advances, introducing laws addressing money laundering, terrorism financing, fiscal transparency, and financial inclusion. This forces banks to identify the final beneficiaries of funds, creates traceability for financial operations, and incorporates tax evasion as a precedent of money laundering. Additionally, the national anti-money laundering secretariat is responsible for implementing money-laundering and terrorism-financing policies. Despite high taxes, the economy is well regulated and the state is well equipped to ensure that legitimate businesses operate freely, while upholding land and property rights.

## **CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION**

The prosecutor's office oversees the protection of victims and witnesses, but although measures to support victims of organized crime have been implemented, it is hard to evaluate their efficacy. Many victims and witnesses may not go to the police for fear of retaliation, and approximately half of all homicides are never solved. More can also be done to identify and support victims of modern slavery.

The government finances a number of drug-treatment centres and the national drug board has a programme called El Portal Amarillo, which tracks those receiving treatment and also attends to their families. Additionally, harm-reduction campaigns have affected the influence of the synthetic drugs market by encouraging users to get products tested for purity. Nonetheless, treatment is scarce and generally run by NGOs such as Remar and Beraca. Other well-known NGOs include the network of youth advocacy organizations, Nada Crece a la Sombra. Moreover, civil society is engaged in the debate over law enforcement and the age of criminal responsibility. With the exception of cannabis-related measures, prevention policies and initiatives in Uruguay are scarce. Although no organized-crime-prevention strategy exists, and local communities are more preoccupied with common street crime, Uruguay does participate in multilateral activities against transnational crime. Although the national police has implemented efforts to re-conceptualize the police-community relationship, these have been sporadic and have not had significant results.

Overall, the media environment in Uruguay is favourable, although threats, intimidation, political pressure, judicial harassment and at least one attempted murder have been recorded.