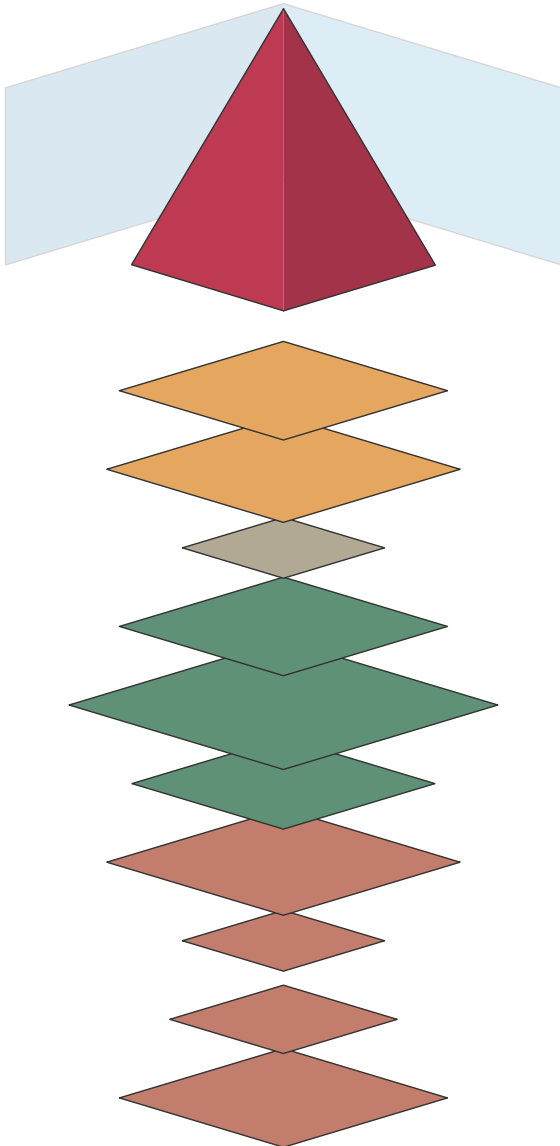




# VIETNAM



## 6.28 CRIMINALITY SCORE

29<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
10<sup>th</sup> of 46 Asian countries  
4<sup>th</sup> of 11 South-Eastern Asian countries



### CRIMINAL MARKETS 6.05

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	6.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	7.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	4.00
FLORA CRIMES	6.50
FAUNA CRIMES	8.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	6.00
HEROIN TRADE	7.00
COCAINE TRADE	4.00
CANNABIS TRADE	4.50
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	6.50



### CRIMINAL ACTORS 6.50

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	6.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	7.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	7.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	6.00



## 4.67 RESILIENCE SCORE

99<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
18<sup>th</sup> of 46 Asian countries  
3<sup>rd</sup> of 11 South-Eastern Asian countries

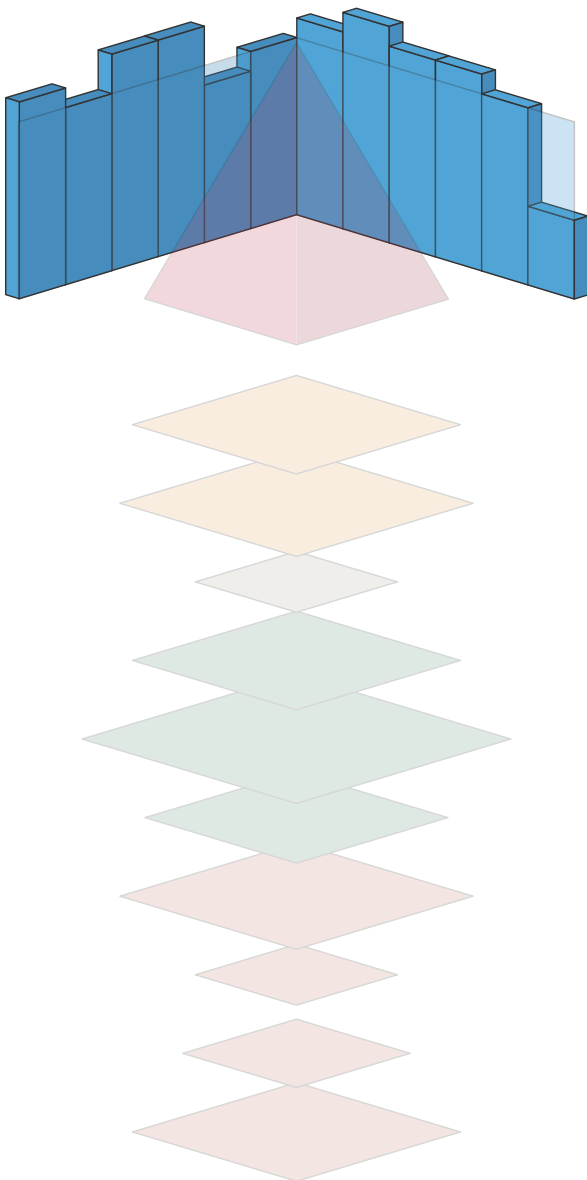


Funding provided by the United States Government.



ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

 **VIETNAM**



 **4.67**  
**RESILIENCE SCORE**

99<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
18<sup>th</sup> of 46 Asian countries  
3<sup>rd</sup> of 11 South-Eastern Asian countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	<b>5.00</b>
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	<b>4.50</b>
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	<b>5.50</b>
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	<b>5.50</b>
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	<b>4.00</b>
LAW ENFORCEMENT	<b>4.50</b>
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	<b>5.00</b>
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	<b>5.50</b>
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	<b>5.00</b>
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	<b>5.00</b>
PREVENTION	<b>4.50</b>
NON-STATE ACTORS	<b>2.00</b>

 **6.28**  
**CRIMINALITY SCORE**

29<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
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 <b>CRIMINAL MARKETS</b>	<b>6.05</b>
 <b>CRIMINAL ACTORS</b>	<b>6.50</b>



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# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Vietnam is a source, destination and transit country for human trafficking connected with different types of crimes, such as forced labour, sex trafficking, child labour and organ trafficking. It is a major source country for the trafficking of women and girls, particularly from ethnic-minority groups and poorer backgrounds, into regional and global sex industries. Moreover, both Vietnamese adults and children are trafficked into forced labour and/or sexual exploitation in Europe, the Middle East and other parts of Asia. To a lesser extent, Vietnam is a destination country for Cambodian and Lao children trafficked into forced labour and/or sexual exploitation. Criminal actors involved in this market include local recruitment agencies, family members and acquaintances of victims, as well as foreign actors. State-embedded actors are also known to facilitate cross-border trafficking operations. The rise of sophisticated cybercrimes has contributed to trafficking activities. Although the official numbers of human-trafficking victims have decreased in recent years, many believe that this is due to a lack of effort to gain information on the part of the Vietnamese authorities. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic is believed to have worsened human trafficking in Vietnam as more people have become vulnerable to exploitation (in particular online), illicit activities have become harder to detect and it has become more difficult to provide direct assistance for vulnerable communities and survivors.

Vietnam's human-smuggling market is believed to have grown in recent years. Many Vietnamese nationals employ smugglers in search of economic stability abroad, particularly other parts of Asia and Europe. Smuggling networks are highly organized and are closely linked with communities in the destination countries. Like human trafficking, Vietnamese authorities are suspected to facilitate cross-border smuggling operations.

### TRADE

Vietnam is potentially a source, destination and transit country for arms trafficking. Despite strict arms regulations, most current civilian possession in the country is illegal. Loose criminal networks are known to sell illicit arms online or at the country's borders, while mafia-style groups sell arms primarily in the capital. Foreign actors also engage in the market, predominantly as buyers. The illicit manufacturing of arms is reportedly on the rise, with most privately manufactured arms being primarily used for agricultural or hunting purposes and sold publicly online or via local networks.

### ENVIRONMENT

Vietnam is a significant source country for illicit timber in the region, as well as illegal timber trafficking from Laos and Cambodia and the smuggling of rosewood from the Mekong region to China. Highly organized, hierarchical organizations are involved in cross-border timber trafficking, which is protected and facilitated by widespread corruption. Illicit logging has resulted in the country losing half of its forest cover over the last 50 years. Similarly, Vietnam's fauna-crimes market has significantly threatened wildlife populations. It is among the largest globally, particularly its illicit ivory market. Moreover, Vietnamese criminal networks are also known to be involved in rhino-horn trafficking, pangolin trafficking, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and captive-bred tiger parts and products. Corruption is known to play a significant role in the market, with officials routinely accepting bribes to facilitate domestic sales and the cross-border trafficking.

Vietnam is also a destination country for oil, gold and diamond smuggling in the region. Vietnam, together with Thailand, is considered to have the largest oil-smuggling markets in South-eastern Asia. While oil smuggling primarily involves Vietnamese criminal networks, state-embedded actors, local fisherman and foreign actors are also known to be involved.

### DRUGS

Heroin is one of Vietnam's largest drug markets. Given its proximity to the Golden Triangle, Vietnam serves primarily as a destination market and as a transit country for heroin to Australia and New Zealand. The country's heroin trade is concentrated along its borders with Laos and Cambodia, where drug lords often rely on poor communities and ethnic minorities to transport heroin across borders. There are strong linkages between organized criminal networks in Vietnam and expatriates in source and destination countries. Corrupt government officials facilitate this trade, as do border officials in the rural borderland provinces. Meanwhile, the synthetic-drug trade is a growing problem in Vietnam. As a transnational hub, Vietnam is both a destination and transit country for methamphetamines produced in the Golden Triangle. It is also a source and transit country for ecstasy and ketamine.

Vietnam is a destination country for cannabis from the USA, Canada, the UK, the Netherlands, Australia, Laos and Cambodia. Additionally, illicit cultivation, storage, trade and use of cannabis within Vietnam is on the rise, especially among Vietnamese youth and students. Vietnam is a transit country for cocaine trafficked from China, Laos and Cambodia, as well as a destination country for cocaine smuggled via cargo from Europe and West Africa. While

cocaine is Vietnam's smallest drug market, the trafficking of cocaine is reportedly on the rise in the country, evidenced by the increase in cocaine detection and seizures.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

Mafia-style criminal groups operate throughout Vietnam, and are mostly involved in the human-trafficking, arms-trafficking and drug-trafficking markets. In particular, local drug lords control territory in the north-western provinces, while arms-trafficking groups control territory in Ho Chi Minh City. Although mafia-style group members have been widely reported to carry knives, swords and guns openly, the rate of violence from these groups is low to moderate, although it may be higher in areas where drug trafficking is more prominent. Similarly, Vietnamese criminal networks have been linked to the human-trafficking and human-smuggling markets, the ivory- and pangolin-trafficking markets, illicit logging operations, arms trafficking, and drug-trafficking markets. Those involved in heroin trafficking are most heavily concentrated along Vietnam's northern and central

northern borders with Laos. Transnational linkages also exist between Vietnamese and foreign criminal networks.

Although Vietnam officially claims to be implementing strict policies to combat organized crime, corrupt officials and state involvement in criminal markets have made it more challenging to assess their purported zero-tolerance stance. State-embedded actors exercise a certain degree of control over Vietnam's illicit logging market, and have also been known to engage in fuel smuggling and other criminal activities. Involvement allegedly occurs at all levels of the state apparatus, although higher-level officials tend to be more involved in flora-related crimes, while low-level officials tend to be more involved in human smuggling and non-renewable-resource crimes. As for foreign actors, since the liberalization of its economic system Vietnam has faced a number of practical challenges from foreign criminal networks, particularly along its northern borders. There is no evidence to suggest that foreign actors exert significant control over criminal markets, although some do have considerable influence in the online gambling market.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Vietnam's Communist Party is the only legal political party in the country, forcing other political parties to operate either in secret or from abroad. There has allegedly been growing public discontent with the Vietnamese Communist Party in recent years, particularly as official corruption in the form of kickbacks, gift requests, nepotism and cronyism remains rampant. While corruption-related arrests and prosecutions against senior officials have reportedly increased in recent years, anti-corruption law enforcement remains highly selective and is linked to political rivalries. On organized crime, while the government has officially taken a strong stance, the presence of state-embedded actors in criminal markets impedes these efforts.

At the international level, Vietnam is a signatory to major UN conventions, as well as bilateral and multilateral agreements, to combat organized crime. The country is also an official member of international and regional police organizations. At the national level, Vietnam lacks legislation specific to organized crime. However, criminal offences incur more severe punishment if they occur in an 'organized manner'. While human trafficking was criminalized in 2015, ambiguity exists in its definition. Similarly, drug trafficking, human smuggling, arms trafficking and flora crimes were also criminalized under the 2015 penal code, including the death penalty for possession, transport or trade of large quantities of heroin and methamphetamines.

Although non-renewable-resource crimes are addressed in the 2015 code, penalties are limited to fines and the confiscation of assets.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Vietnam lacks an independent judiciary. Nevertheless, the country's judicial system does take a strong stance against drug-related crimes, evidenced by the greater prosecution of drug crimes over other criminal markets. There are also harsher sentences for drug crimes, including the death penalty. Vietnam has the third-highest execution rate in the world, and has been criticized for its harsh prison conditions. Regarding law enforcement, Vietnam has reduced its anti-trafficking efforts in recent years. Additionally, there has been a reduction in human-trafficking investigations and prosecutions, due in part to a lack of collaboration between government agencies and municipalities, low budgets and low levels of trafficking awareness, as well as delays in implementing anti-trafficking legislation. Vietnam has also been accused of failing to combat flora, fauna and oil crimes. Meanwhile, law enforcement has increased efforts to curb arms trafficking, and state-owned media sources have reported an increase in the detection and seizing of illicit drugs. Since Vietnam's north-western borders are particularly vulnerable to criminal markets, the country has also made an effort to strengthen its border-control

capacity and increased its border-control staff in recent years.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Vietnam is assessed to have one of the highest risks of money laundering and terrorist financing in the world. The country's economic growth rates, foreign-investment levels, lack of credible regulatory controls and largely cash-based economy makes it susceptible to money laundering. Within the country, local drug lords often control both illicit and licit economic activities through the recruitment and management of businesses via family connections. Additionally, criminal groups involved in human-trafficking and human-smuggling operations are known to provide financial services, or 'shark loans', to victims. Vietnam has promised to improve and cooperate with regional and international agencies on the topic of money laundering. Additionally, the country has introduced collaborative efforts to provide anti-money-laundering guidance to prosecutors and law-enforcement officials. Vietnamese anti-money-laundering legislation also requires businesses in select sectors to participate in anti-money-laundering programmes, and individuals convicted of money laundering may be subjected to imprisonment, fines, bans from government positions and confiscation of property.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Vietnam's anti-trafficking laws contain provisions for victim support, including travel funds, shelter, medical and psychological support, legal aid, educational support and vocational training. However, the country has struggled to put effective measures in place, and has also reduced efforts to support and protect survivors and victims in recent years. Additionally, organizations providing support to human-trafficking victims are not funded by the government, and are often short-staffed, poorly funded and lacking resources. In 2019 the government created a fund to support and encourage law enforcement in crime prevention. Furthermore, it recently made efforts to prevent forestry and wildlife crime, including a partnership aimed at training wildlife-enforcement officers to better understand and address wildlife crime. The Vietnamese Ministry of Education also holds awareness campaigns in schools and universities against 'social evils'. However, this narrative engenders a stigma against people who use drugs and victims of human trafficking. Vietnam also lacks a whistle-blower protection programme.

Meanwhile, Vietnam's civil society is underdeveloped due to its single-party system. Non-state actors operate under strict government surveillance and are reluctant to criticize government activities. As far as the media is concerned, Vietnam has one of the harshest environments in Asia, with all media outlets either entirely or partially state owned. A cybersecurity law enacted in 2019 requiring social media companies to remove any content deemed

'toxic' by the government is among the latest steps taken by the Vietnamese state to crack down on free speech and freedom of the press in the country. Bloggers and independent journalists are subject to censorship and imprisonment. Vietnam is also one of Asia's most prolific jailers of peaceful activists, with activists routinely charged under laws that prohibit activities opposing the government.

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