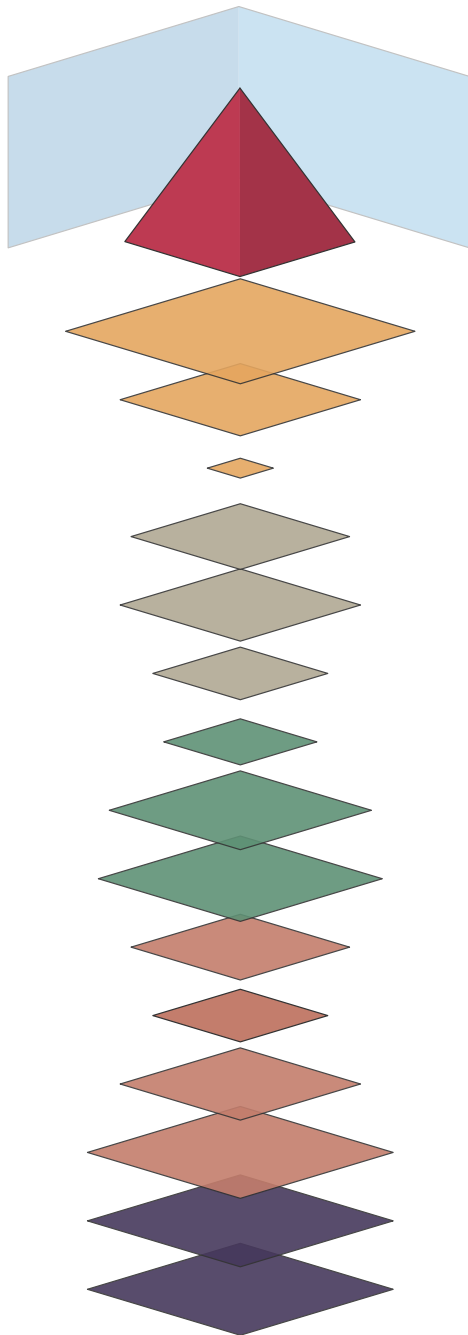




BAHRAIN



4.95

CRIMINALITY SCORE

98th of 193 countries

27th of 46 Asian countries

11th of 14 Western Asian countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS

5.40

HUMAN TRAFFICKING 8.00

HUMAN SMUGGLING 5.50

EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING 1.50

ARMS TRAFFICKING 5.00

TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS 5.50

ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS 4.00

FLORA CRIMES 3.50

FAUNA CRIMES 6.00

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES 6.50

HEROIN TRADE 5.00

COCAINE TRADE 4.00

CANNABIS TRADE 5.50

SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE 7.00

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES 7.00

FINANCIAL CRIMES 7.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS

4.50

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS 1.50

CRIMINAL NETWORKS 6.00

STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS 4.00

FOREIGN ACTORS 5.00

PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS 6.00

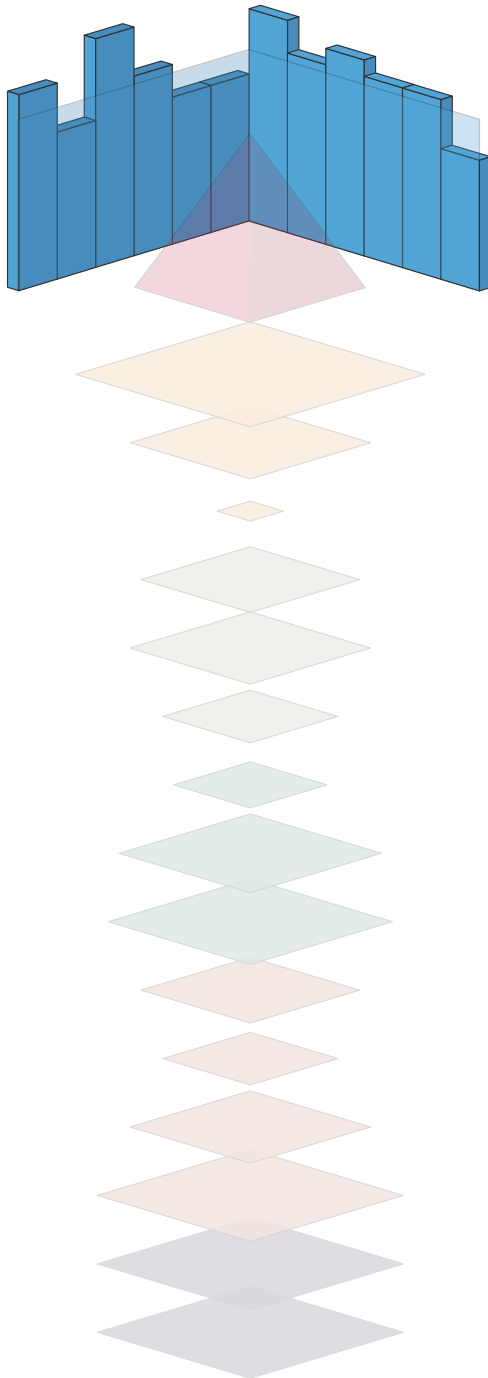


5.42

RESILIENCE SCORE



 **BAHRAIN**





 **5.42**
RESILIENCE SCORE

62nd of 193 countries
10th of 46 Asian countries
4th of 14 Western Asian countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	6.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	4.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	7.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	5.50
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	4.50
LAW ENFORCEMENT	4.50
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	6.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	6.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	5.50
PREVENTION	5.50
NON-STATE ACTORS	4.00

 **4.95**
CRIMINALITY SCORE

 CRIMINAL MARKETS	5.40
 CRIMINAL ACTORS	4.50



Funding provided by the United States Government.



Funded by the European Union

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.

CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Bahrain, a small country with a large economy, relies heavily on foreign labour, which makes it a prime destination for human trafficking activity. The country's migrants typically originate from South and Southeast Asia and Africa. They typically enter the country legally in search of higher-paying jobs, some of which end up leading to modern slavery. Exploitative labour practices in Bahrain include passport retention, limitations on freedom of movement, non-payment of wages, debt bondage and physical or sexual abuse. Bahrain's use of the Kafala system, which legally connects migrant workers to their employers, further exacerbates the risk of these workers falling victim to modern slavery. Bangladeshis make up the majority of foreign workers in the country, but the number of workers from African states has increased in recent years. Nationals from countries without diplomatic representation in Bahrain, particularly African states, are especially susceptible. Human traffickers have also been known to take advantage of major events – such as the Formula 1 races, which grant two-week tourist visas to race ticket holders – to bring people into the country for the purpose of exploitation. However, the human trafficking market in Bahrain is smaller than that of many of its neighbours, with most of the profits derived from trafficking accrued to local actors.

Bahrain is a destination country for foreign migrants, who usually enter through formal channels. Instances of human smuggling into the country are relatively limited, mainly due to the country's location near more prominent smuggling destinations like Qatar and Saudi Arabia. There have been occasional cases of young Saudi men informally entering the country in search of greater personal freedom, although these activities are typically not organized by established smuggling networks. The issue of extortion and protection racketeering is small in Bahrain, with very few cases reported.

TRADE

Bahrain has a relatively small market for arms trafficking, and the illicit flow of weapons and ammunition into the country has declined in recent years. However, it is uncertain whether this reflects a genuine reduction in trafficking or a shift to less detectable routes. Most of the illicit arms are believed to originate from Iranian forces, but it remains unclear to what extent Iranian supplies are present in the country. Bahraini security forces regularly arrest suspected militants and confiscate weapons and explosives believed to come from Iran, sometimes in connection with

terrorist groups. Weapons from Iran reportedly enter the country through maritime routes on small boats, which are difficult for local coastguards to detect. Bahrain exempts all military procurement from public tender and does not regulate the use of intermediaries in procurement, making it susceptible to corruption.

In addition, despite its small size, Bahrain is an attractive location for the illicit trade in counterfeit goods. Websites selling fake brands are widespread in the country, and there is a particular interest in counterfeit clothes, shoes, watches and jewellery. Nevertheless, the market remains smaller than that of many other countries in the region. While the illicit trade in excise goods is not a significant issue in Bahrain, there have been some minor incidents in which criminals illegally imported excise goods to evade taxes, including tobacco products.

ENVIRONMENT

Environmental crimes are present in Bahrain, including the illicit trades in flora and fauna, as well as non-renewable crimes. The country's involvement in the transnational illicit flora market is limited, with occasional reports of illegal imports of agarwood, olive trees, cedar, frankincense and myrrh, though there is little evidence to support these claims. Bahrain serves as a transit and destination zone for illegal wildlife products, but its role in the trade is limited compared to other countries in the region. There have been instances of animals being smuggled from abandoned zoos and breeding stations in Syria into Bahrain. Notably, Bahrain is a significant destination country for trafficked African grey parrots, which are illegally imported from African states despite a national ban in Bahrain.

Despite not being an oil-rich nation, Bahrain has experienced crude oil theft. Reports suggest that a network of thieves, comprising both domestic and foreign actors, steals oil from trucks belonging to oil companies and sells it in other countries where prices are much higher, enabling them to reap large profits. However, the total volume of oil theft remains relatively lower than that of its neighbours. Bahrain also has a small illicit market for gold and diamonds, but there is no indication of an organized crime role.

DRUGS

Bahrain's heroin market is relatively small, possibly due to the greater degree of stigmatization associated with heroin as compared to other drugs. There is little information available about the cocaine market in Bahrain, and its use and trade are considerably less prevalent than cannabis and synthetic drugs. The high price of cocaine in the country suggests that cocaine consumption remains limited to a

small but highly prosperous sector of Bahraini society. Law enforcement occasionally arrests foreign citizens for attempting to smuggle cocaine into the country via its airports.

Conversely, Bahrain is a larger destination country for cannabis and, to a lesser extent, a transit country. While domestic cannabis consumption is low, it is the most-seized drug by Bahraini customs and police. The country is notorious as a go-to destination for Saudi nationals wanting to experiment with cannabis and other substances. The primary source countries for cannabis are Saudi Arabia and Iran, but the region is also supplied with cannabis produced in North Africa.

The synthetic drug trade is currently Bahrain's largest drug market, which primarily serves as a destination point for Captagon, methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs, including new psychoactive substances. The rising prevalence of synthetic drugs is believed to be responsible for the increase in drug seizures in the country, with Captagon being the most-seized drug. Methamphetamine, which is primarily sourced from Southeast Asia, is also becoming increasingly popular in the region, particularly among Bahraini youth, and is commonly transported through the country's airports. Although there is limited information available about the demographics of synthetic drug users in Bahrain, truck drivers in the country reportedly use Captagon to remain alert during long journeys, while women use it to lose weight.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crimes are a significant issue in Bahrain, with the country's high internet penetration rate serving as an appealing factor for local and foreign organized crime groups. Small and medium-sized enterprises are particularly vulnerable, constituting the majority of reported victims of trojan attacks in the country. Additionally, geopolitical tensions in Western Asia have created an environment in which state-sponsored actors and other groups attempt to exploit vulnerabilities in the region's critical infrastructure and private organizations. Iranian groups have been known to target Bahrain and other states in the Gulf, with governmental institutions being particularly vulnerable. Major incidents have been reported at the national oil company, the electricity and water authority, the transportation and telecommunication ministry, and the National Bank of Bahrain. Various ransomware incidents have also been reported in recent years, severely impacting the public sector and adding to the growing concern over the impact of cybercrime on the national economy and security. Moreover, the adoption of digital assets in Bahrain has attracted scammers to steal large sums of money by luring people into fake cryptocurrency investment schemes.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes are prevalent in Bahrain, with criminals taking advantage of its well-functioning financial industry as well as increased internet use following pandemic-related lockdowns to target a broader audience, including the government, businesses and Bahraini citizens. Phishing is one of the most common financial crimes in the country. Scammers employ various tactics, such as sending messages and making calls on social media, creating fake websites and impersonating legitimate organizations or public officials, including police officers. Instances of online banking scams are on the rise, with criminals stealing money from citizens and company accounts through cash transfer apps and spam calls. Fake prize schemes aimed at stealing banking information are also widespread, with scammers contacting victims through social media and persuading them to update their banking details or extorting them.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Organized criminal activity in Bahrain is primarily carried out by small networks of people who are involved in drug trafficking, including the distribution of cannabis, heroin and synthetic drugs. These criminal networks consist of both Bahraini and foreign nationals, some of whom have ties to foreign criminal groups. Criminal networks are also thought to be involved in human trafficking, bringing women from South and Southeast Asia to the country for labour exploitation in the form of domestic servitude. While these criminal networks do not control territory and are seldom armed, they are widely present throughout the country due to Bahrain's small geographic area. However, most reported arrests of criminal network members occur in the country's capital, Manama, in the northern part of Bahrain island. Some criminal networks have ties with foreign actors, such as the methamphetamine smuggling gangs who are thought to have connections in Southeast Asia. Cannabis smuggled into the country via Saudi Arabia is typically brought in by small groups of two or three people, while cannabis from Iran is typically sourced from larger and more professional networks with the involvement of groups from Southeast Asia. Iranian networks are also believed to facilitate arms trafficking flows into Bahrain.

Private sector actors are also increasingly becoming involved in criminal activities, in addition to the corruption and clientelism embedded in the private sector. Notably, legally-established recruitment agencies are key players in the human trafficking market. Other private sector actors are known to carry out illegal activities that may constitute human trafficking, including passport confiscation and wage theft, which are common practices in the country. In recent years, there have been increased reports of conflicts of interest, embezzlement, bribery and money laundering involving the state. In recent years, corruption among state officials has become a growing concern in Bahrain. There is little evidence of the presence of mafia-style groups in Bahrain.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Bahrain has relatively low levels of organized criminal activity, which has prevented the topic from becoming a significant political debate in the country. However, the government is proactive in addressing organized crime, more so than other countries in the Gulf. Nevertheless, these efforts to tackle certain criminal markets, especially drug markets, have not been effective. Bahrain's political representation has been a source of controversy, with pro-democracy movements and opposition groups alleging inadequate representation and an unfair electoral system. Bahrain was once a leading state in terms of political reform and democratization, but is now considered one of the most repressive states in the region. Since 2011, opposition groups and political societies have been dissolved or banned, and their leaders have been arrested, exiled or stripped of their nationality. This has resulted in an environment in which the government dominates the political landscape and opposition voices are silenced, leading to sustained unrest in the country. Despite recent efforts by the government to combat corruption, the country continues to struggle with transparency and accountability in the public sector. There are allegations of large-scale corruption and embezzlement of funds, with the alleged involvement of senior officials from the ruling regime.

Bahrain has made efforts to combat organized crime by participating in various international anti-organized crime bodies and forums, and partnering with the UAE and the US. While Bahrain has a robust legislative framework to counter organized crime, there are some areas of concern. The country is not a party to the UN Firearms Protocol, and its legislation on arms use and trafficking has been criticized for being too lenient in terms of penalties. Additionally, Bahrain's laws to protect wildlife are not enforced, and the Kafala system, which restricts the freedom of movement of employees, has been criticized for its vulnerability to human trafficking. Bahrain has taken steps to enhance its cybersecurity and combat the trafficking of excise goods through a digital stamp scheme.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Bahrain's judicial system lacks a dedicated court to handle organized crime cases. Instead, civil law courts or the Court of Cassation handle such cases. While court decisions are generally not influenced by corrupt practices, there have been a few reports of prison officials accepting bribes. Concerns about the judiciary's independence persist due to political pressure. Assessing the extent of corruption or organized crime within Bahrain's prison system is challenging due to limited transparency and lack of independent oversight. Human rights organizations have

raised concerns about harsh prison conditions, including instances of torture, abuse and medical negligence. Since the 2011 protests, conditions in Bahrain's prisons have worsened, due to overcrowding, mistreatment by prison authorities, inadequate healthcare and security officers abusing prisoners' human rights with impunity.

Bahrain's location as an island nation provides an advantage in reducing various forms of trafficking in and out of the country, as it is difficult to reach the island state by boat. Bahrain is among the most heavily policed states in the world, and there are widespread reports of systemic police abuse, including torture, arbitrary detention and sexual assault. Prosecutors and judges have been accused of enabling these abuses and refusing to allow lawyers to be present during interrogations. Bahrain has also been criticized for failing to adequately investigate cases of unpaid wages, passport retention and other practices of modern slavery.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The risk of money laundering and terrorist financing in Bahrain is currently moderate. The Bahraini authorities are aware of these risks and have strengthened their resilience by implementing tighter national regulations, resulting in the country's removal from the EU's blacklist of tax havens in 2018. Currently, Bahrain has a robust anti-money laundering framework, which includes an effective financial intelligence unit. However, additional measures are needed to enhance resilience in Bahrain's economic and financial environment.

The size of the country's informal sector is unclear, but it is believed to make up a significant proportion of the labour force. Bahrain's economy continues to heavily depend on oil revenues, which makes the country vulnerable to fluctuations in oil prices. Nevertheless, the country has made significant progress in resolving insolvency in recent years, which could reduce the incentives for engaging in illicit economic activities.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Bahrain has taken significant steps towards combating modern slavery and human trafficking, and was the first country in the region to establish a fund to assist victims. This assistance fund covers the cost of essential services and provides financial support to victims as they reintegrate into their home countries or seek employment in Bahrain. The government established clear guidelines to identify and screen potential victims and set up hotlines to report human trafficking crimes. However, the Kafala sponsorship visa system has been criticized by international organizations

for giving employers excessive power over foreign workers, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.

Although Bahrain has made significant strides in addressing human trafficking, it still faces challenges in other areas, such as preventing organized crime and illegal trade in pets and animal products. These issues are often considered taboo topics in conservative social contexts, and the heavy presence of law enforcement and limited social discussion further impede progress in these areas.

Bahrain's government exercises strict control over the media, resulting in severe restrictions on press freedom as well as freedom of assembly and expression. All broadcast media outlets are government-owned, and the main newspapers are owned by people with ties to the state. Journalists, photographers and social media users who report on sensitive issues, such as national security or criticism of the royal family, are at risk of harassment, arrest and threats. Foreign journalists also face difficulties in obtaining press visas to enter Bahrain. In addition to media censorship, the government closely monitors non-state organizations, effectively co-opting them to serve state interests, and leaving limited room for independent action from civil society.

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.