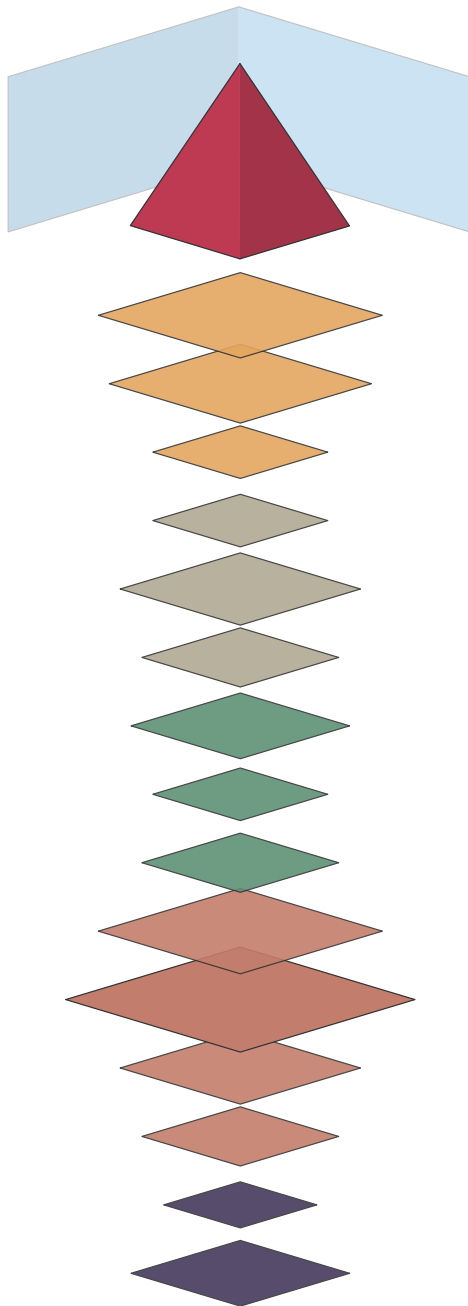


DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



5.02 CRIMINALITY SCORE

94th of 193 countries
20th of 35 American countries
4th of 13 Caribbean countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS 5.13

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	6.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	6.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	4.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	4.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	5.50
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	4.50
FLORA CRIMES	5.00
FAUNA CRIMES	4.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	4.50
HEROIN TRADE	6.50
COCAINE TRADE	8.00
CANNABIS TRADE	5.50
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	4.50
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	3.50
FINANCIAL CRIMES	5.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS 4.90

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	5.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5.50
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	5.50
FOREIGN ACTORS	4.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	4.50

4.79 RESILIENCE SCORE

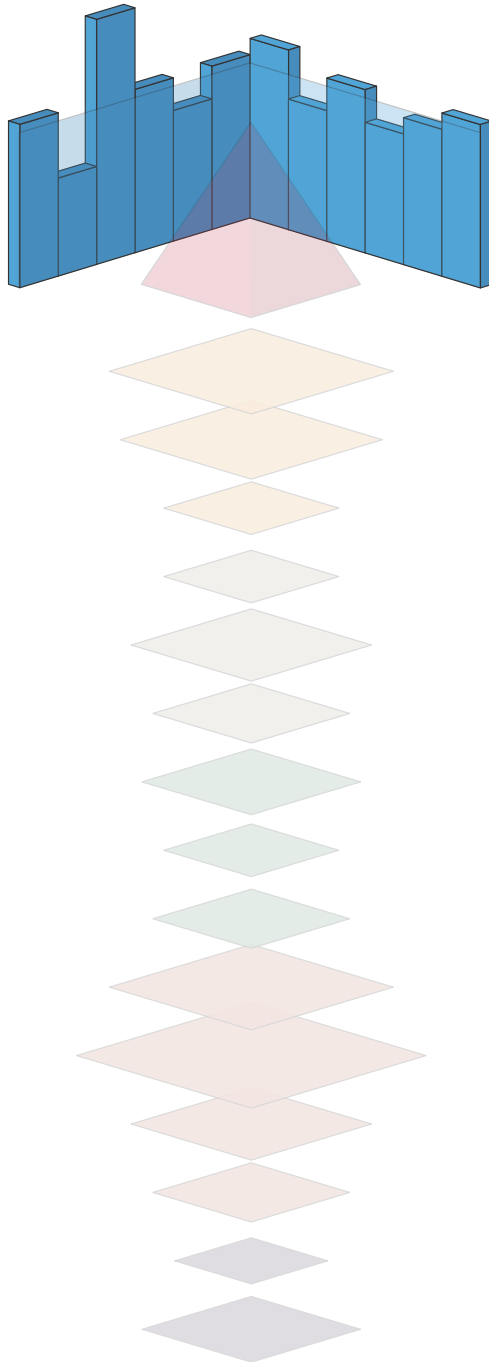


Funding provided by the United States Government.



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.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC





4.79 **RESILIENCE SCORE**

99th of 193 countries
21st of 35 American countries
11th of 13 Caribbean countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	5.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	3.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	7.50
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	5.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	4.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	5.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	4.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	5.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	4.00
PREVENTION	4.50
NON-STATE ACTORS	5.00

5.02 **CRIMINALITY SCORE**

 CRIMINAL MARKETS	5.13
 CRIMINAL ACTORS	4.90



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

The Dominican Republic is a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking. The phenomenon predominantly takes the form of sexual exploitation but forced labour and exploitation for the purposes of domestic work, arranged marriages and recruitment into criminal networks are other forms of trafficking that occur in the country. Victims of human trafficking, either locals or foreign nationals transiting the Dominican Republic, are destined for various destinations, most often the US, Europe and South America. Victims from other countries may also be trafficked into the Dominican Republic. Recent years have seen an influx of Venezuelan and Haitian trafficking victims, but Colombian nationals are also vulnerable to exploitation in the country. Like their foreign counterparts, victims from the Dominican Republic are typically subjected to forced labour, usually in construction, agriculture and the service sectors, or sexual exploitation, mainly in the country's beach resorts. Dominicans are lured under false pretences by networks operating throughout the country. Given the links between the tourism sector and sexual exploitation, it is probable that much of the value of the human trafficking market in the country is generated through foreign demand.

The Dominican Republic is a transit country for Haitians moving to South America irregularly. It is also a source country for migrants smuggled to other countries in the region, such as Chile, the US and, particularly, nearby Puerto Rico. Human smuggling activities in the Dominican Republic are enabled by factors such as the country's geographic position, the crises in Haiti and Venezuela, and widespread administrative corruption in the country. Perpetrators of human smuggling into and through the Dominican Republic tend to belong to networks based in the victims' countries of origin, particularly groups from Haiti. The use of falsified documentation is a common practice and migrants are usually transported by sea, with shipwrecks on sea crossings occurring more frequently. These maritime routes are usually the same as those used for other types of crimes, such as arms trafficking.

Extortion has increased considerably following the COVID-19 pandemic, with international extortion groups, with Dominican members, targeting both locals and nationals from Spain, Argentina and the US.

TRADE

The Dominican Republic is a destination market for illegal small arms and light weapons. The US plays a considerable role in the arms market in the Dominican Republic, with reports suggesting that illicit arms flows originate in Florida and enter the country by sea. The porous Haitian border is another known entry point for arms into the Dominican Republic. In line with regional trends, the Dominican Republic has a high incidence of death by firearms. Recent official data shows that the number of illegal weapons circulating in the country is still notable, with approximately three illegally trafficked weapons for every registered weapon. There is also some evidence that Dominican Republic military and police personnel have been involved in the criminal market for small arms and light weapons.

The Dominican Republic is a site for the production and consumption of counterfeit products and goods, including pharmaceuticals. Counterfeit medicines entering the US originate in countries such as the Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic is also involved in the illicit trade in excise goods, such as cigarettes, which are often used by international criminals as a bargaining chip, causing revenue losses for the state. Smuggling of alcoholic beverages has also been a problem for years. Haitians and Chinese nationals are among the foreigners involved in this criminal market.

ENVIRONMENT

The main forms of flora-related crimes in the Dominican Republic are the illegal harvesting of timber and the illegal charcoal trade. These illegal timber and charcoal products are believed to circulate regionally. In addition, the Dominican Republic is a transit country for illegal Amazonian timber destined for Mexico and the US and appears to be a destination country for illegal timber originating in Peru. Although the timber market is relatively small, there is a large market for Cactaceae, Liliaceae and Asphodelaceae, particularly aloes, which are exported to the US. Although these florae are not currently endangered, the high trade volume and widespread corruption present in the trade represent a possible future problem. The increasing scarcity of flora in the Dominican Republic has led to violence, spilling over into Haiti, where there is still an abundance. Furthermore, flora crimes often lead to other forms of criminal activity, such as labour exploitation and tax evasion.

The Dominican Republic is rich in biodiversity and is home to many endangered species that are in demand on the black market. Many fauna species, particularly turtles, are sold as souvenirs to tourists and there is also a larger illicit economy in sea turtle products such as eggs, meat and shells. Another profitable commodity in the Dominican

Republic is the American eel, which is in high demand in Asian countries, largely for culinary purposes.

The Dominican Republic is rich in various non-renewable resources and has numerous limestone, clay and salt mines. Artisanal and unregulated mining takes place at some sites. The Dominican Republic also plays an important role in the illicit gold trafficking market, acting as a transit country for illegal gold of Venezuelan origin. Illegal trafficking of Venezuelan gold is perpetrated by transnational criminal organizations and networks, which are simultaneously engaged in other forms of trafficking, such as drug trafficking.

DRUGS

The Dominican Republic is a regional transit hub for heroin, with the US being the primary destination for heroin coming out of the country. There is also a growing domestic demand, with profits from the market being accrued by both domestic and foreign actors.

Cocaine constitutes the largest single criminal market in the Dominican Republic, which is believed to be the leading Caribbean transit hub for cocaine from Venezuela destined for North America or Europe. Cocaine is primarily imported into the country using go-fast boats and shipping containers. From the Dominican Republic, traffickers often target Puerto Rico as a gateway into the US. Similarly, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Anguilla, Bermuda and the British Virgin Islands provide opportunities for organized crime groups to ship cocaine to France and the UK. Traffickers also often target Spain, where there is a substantial Dominican diaspora, making Spain the principal European entry point for cocaine from the Dominican Republic. Domestic drug consumption is primarily concentrated in metropolitan and tourist areas. The cocaine trade is the most pervasive drug market in the Dominican Republic; however, cannabis is the most consumed drug in the country. Cannabis is trafficked into the country, primarily across the land border shared with Haiti, where the drug is cultivated, and from Jamaica. Criminal networks from both the Dominican Republic and Haiti collaborate in the trafficking of cannabis, which is often imported into the country by truck, hidden among other products.

Synthetic drugs, including Ecstasy, Fentanyl and its analogs, are manufactured in the Dominican Republic. Furthermore, the country is a trans-shipment point for Ecstasy, moving from its countries of origin, namely the Netherlands and Belgium, to North America.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Hacking and illicit access to protected systems are the most common cyber-dependent crimes. The number of cyber-attack attempts reported has increased in recent years. In 2022, the portals of more than a dozen institutions were targeted by a group of hackers based in other countries.

Criminal organizations use cryptocurrencies to launder money and defraud individuals. Most cybercrimes occur at a transnational level due to loopholes in the Dominican Republic's legal system.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

The Dominican Republic has challenges with fraud in public procurement, which has increased considerably since the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent discoveries indicate increased levels of embezzlement of state funds as well as telephone scams carried out by criminal networks located in the country, targeting individuals both in and out of the country. This may also demonstrate the potential of the financial fraud market in the Dominican Republic. Pyramid schemes continue to present a challenge in the country and demonstrate how electronic media is used by criminal networks to steal identities and defraud people in the Dominican Republic.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Criminal networks play important roles in the human trafficking, human smuggling and drug trafficking markets, as well as some of the smaller criminal markets such as the environmental or natural resources market. Criminal markets in the Dominican Republic rely heavily on transnational links, including with Dominican nationals operating abroad and foreign actors living and operating in the Dominican Republic. These individuals often keep a low profile while they oversee the transport of drug shipments and the collection and repatriation of profits. Criminal networks from Haiti work collaboratively with domestic ones, especially in the trafficking of cannabis and in the transportation of illegal timber. Furthermore, the human smuggling market is also predominantly under the control of Haitian cartels.

State-embedded actors participate in various criminal activities, particularly in the drug trade and in schemes aimed at committing money laundering, bribery and defrauding the state. There have been multiple cases of military and police personnel participating in drug trafficking, and of links between drug traffickers and high-level officials and politicians. Moreover, accusations have also recently been levelled against members of the military reportedly engaged in criminal association, swindling, falsification of public documents, money laundering, and illegal possession and carrying of weapons.

Inside the Dominican Republic, mafia-style groups known as *naciones* and *pandillas* are heavily involved in the organized crime landscape. The most prominent groups are the Latin Kings, Los Trinitarios, the Bloods, Los 42, Metálicos, Ñetas, Mercaderos, Dorados and Rastafrys, among others. These groups have a presence in the larger cities of both the Dominican Republic and the US, and are involved in drug retailing, extortion, racketeering and money laundering. They have a defined, centralized, hierarchical structure and

are small membership organizations. They recruit young people and use high levels of violence. The influence of these gangs may have waned in recent years. However, they still have significant territorial control and often have the capacity to provide services within their territories.

Private sector actors involved in criminal activities in the country mostly engage in money laundering schemes,

where proceeds accrued from illicit operations based in the US are being laundered. These private companies often collaborate with public officials or public entities to enter illicit markets. Criminal groups involved in drug trafficking also frequently establish companies, often in the real estate sector, for the sole purpose of laundering profits earned from other illegal activities.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Political leaders in the Dominican Republic have made statements warning of the threats posed by organized crime, especially drug trafficking. Although the country has made some improvements in security at the community crime level and in the fight against drug trafficking, it is not yet possible to say whether these efforts have been successful. Corruption continues to be widespread in the Dominican Republic and recent government administrations have failed to tackle the country's systemic corruption. The Dominican Republic's anti-corruption framework exhibits significant shortcomings, notably the absence of a specialized institution dedicated to combating corruption.

The Dominican Republic has demonstrated its commitment to cooperating with international efforts to combat organized crime in the number of the international treaties and conventions it has ratified. An extradition law is in place, and extradition agreements are in place with the US, Brazil, Panama, Mexico, Italy, Spain, Chile and Haiti, as well as members of the Organization of American States. In addition, INTERPOL cooperates with national police in the Dominican Republic through its office in Santo Domingo. The Dominican Republic also has domestic legislation specifically targeting some criminal markets, including trafficking of arms and drugs. There is currently a proposal to create a regulation that allows ownership to be extinguished in cases of organized crime and corruption. However, approving this proposal has proved to be very difficult, demonstrating how problematic it is for the country to take effective legislative measures to fight organized crime. Furthermore, the country does not appear to have domestic legislation relating specifically to organized criminal groups and membership of an organized criminal group is not criminalized.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Although nominally independent, the judiciary often suffers from political interference, corruption and a lack of adequate resources and personnel. The penitentiary system in the Dominican Republic has recently changed, unifying traditional prisons and rehabilitation centres. This new model was proposed to ensure more effective prisoner rehabilitation and social reinsertion programmes. However, recent fights and brawls within the prisons have led experts to suggest that structural changes in the prisons system have not occurred. Similarly, prison overcrowding continues to hinder progress in establishing social reinsertion systems.

High levels of corruption pose a challenge to law enforcement in the Dominican Republic. However, some improvements have occurred, and the national police has established dedicated units for narcotics, human trafficking, fraud and cybercrime.

The country's geographic location along major drug-trafficking routes continues to be a significant source of vulnerability. The country's border with Haiti, in particular, continues to represent a historical point of tension, as well as a point of vulnerability for the Dominican Republic, with a notable volume of both legal and illicit flows passing across the border. The Dominican Republic has a specialized land border security corps, and regular troops have also been deployed to help curb the irregular movement of people and contraband across the border. With regards to the protection of the cyberspace, it is acknowledged that the country's technological infrastructure is vulnerable to cyber-attacks, and state information is in constant danger. The protection of essential digital services and personal data protection is practically nonexistent and the fight against cybercrime has shown no progress.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Despite recent updates to the country's anti-money laundering regulations to better comply with international standards, corruption, a large informal sector and weak financial controls make the country vulnerable to money laundering and illicit financial flows. The government is currently trying to overcome the deficiencies in the anti-money laundering and counter terrorism financing standards but it seems that the risks for these types of crimes are increasing rather than diminishing.

The Dominican Republic has one of the largest economies in the Caribbean and its sustained growth since 2014 has led to a reduction in poverty and inequality. However, there is still a substantial informal economy embedded within the country. The economy is largely dependent on the tourism sector. However, the country's coastal resorts are known to be hubs for commercial sexual exploitation, with establishments ranging from bars and spas to beaches, streets and public parks all functioning as areas of recruitment and operation.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The penal code in the Dominican Republic guarantees victims and witnesses of crime the right to protection. The government has launched initiatives to assist drug users through the introduction of an opioid substitution programme and the introduction of alternatives to imprisonment for drug offenders. However, significant deficiencies exist in

the government's response to victims of human trafficking. It does not offer comprehensive and sufficient specialized services to victims of human trafficking, nor are mechanisms in place to effectively identify victims or refer them to care once identified. Furthermore, the inefficiencies of both the government and the police in protecting and supporting victims creates a disincentive to report crimes. Meanwhile, the prosecution of these crimes is ineffective, which also makes it less likely for victims to report such crimes to law enforcement officials.

The government has introduced crime-prevention strategies such as a community policing force focused on crime prevention and public safety. Furthermore, a community youth police programme is in operation. However, the Dominican Republic has been slow to establish prevention, care and rehabilitation mechanisms for drug users. It has also not implemented effective programmes and strategies, nor improved those it currently has.

The country is home to many active civil-society organizations and the government has taken steps to increase the space in which civil society can operate. Press freedom is still often undermined and many journalists self-censor due to fear of violence.

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