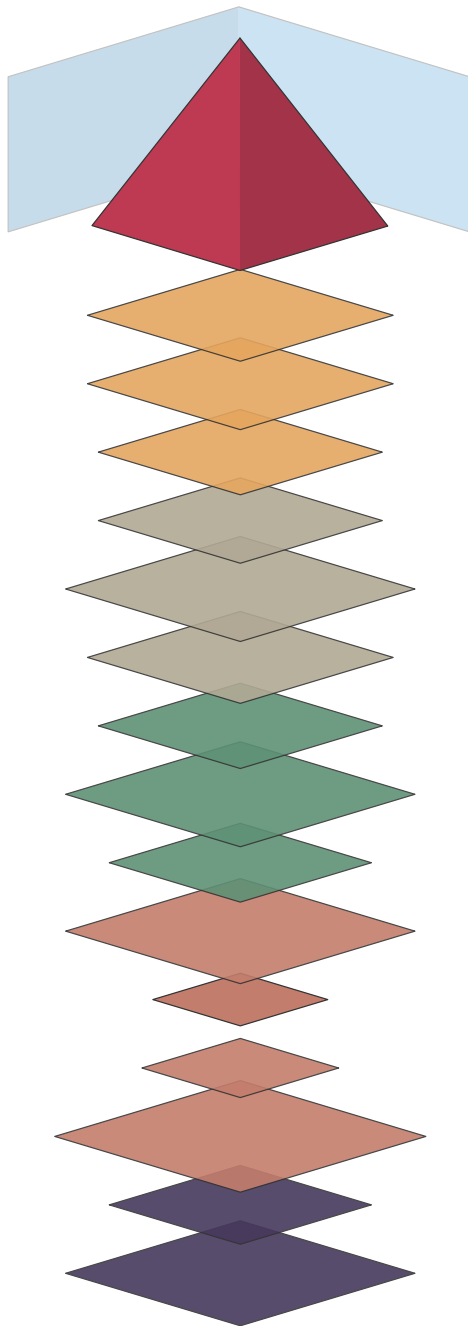


 **THAILAND**



 **6.18**  
**CRIMINALITY SCORE**

44<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
18<sup>th</sup> of 46 Asian countries  
7<sup>th</sup> of 11 South-Eastern Asian countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS** **6.77**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	7.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	7.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	6.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	6.50
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	8.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	7.00
FLORA CRIMES	6.50
FAUNA CRIMES	8.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	6.00
HEROIN TRADE	8.00
COCAINE TRADE	4.00
CANNABIS TRADE	4.50
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	8.50
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	6.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	8.00

 **CRIMINAL ACTORS** **5.60**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	6.50
FOREIGN ACTORS	7.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	7.00

 **4.79**  
**RESILIENCE SCORE**



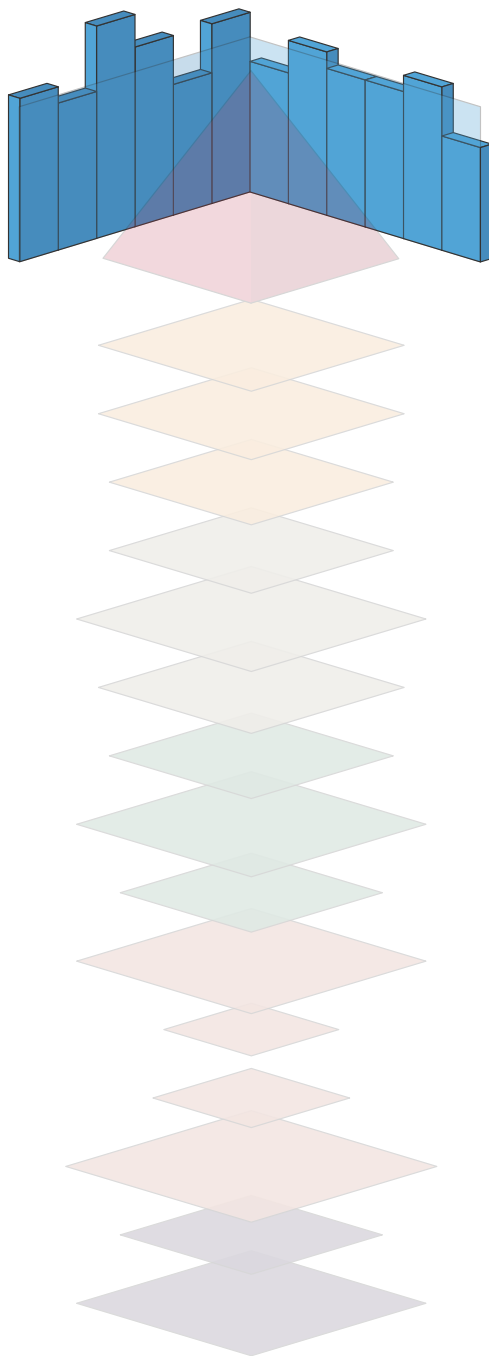
Funding provided by the United States Government.



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.

 **THAILAND**



 **4.79**  
**RESILIENCE SCORE**  
99<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
17<sup>th</sup> of 46 Asian countries  
3<sup>rd</sup> of 11 South-Eastern Asian countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	5.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	4.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.50
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	5.50
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	4.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.50
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	4.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	4.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	4.50
PREVENTION	5.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	3.50

 **6.18**  
**CRIMINALITY SCORE**

 <b>CRIMINAL MARKETS</b>	6.77
 <b>CRIMINAL ACTORS</b>	5.60



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

Thailand serves as a source, transit and a destination country for human trafficking. Labour and sex traffickers exploit women, men, LGBTQ+ individuals, and children from various countries. The COVID-19 pandemic initially decreased the demand for trafficking victims but resulted in increased vulnerability for those exposed. Victimization worsened due to the pandemic's financial impact, and children from families that lost employment became increasingly at risk of trafficking. Some parents or brokers force children to sell items, beg or work in domestic service in urban areas. Trafficking networks are supported by corrupt officials, and employers exploit workers in various industries using debt-based coercion and deceptive recruitment practices, as well as other means. Vessel owners, brokers and senior crew subject men and boys to forced labour on fishing boats, without adequate food, water or medical supplies. Thailand also serves as a transit hub for people trafficked into cyber-scam operations in neighbouring countries.

Human smuggling remains a serious and ongoing problem in Thailand. The country serves as a transit hub for smuggled individuals seeking either exit or entry from Thailand. Most individuals are smuggled to Thailand from neighbouring countries, such as Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Heightened border controls and other measures have increased the level of sophistication and costs associated with human smuggling across borders, which greatly affects victims. State-embedded actors and private sector employees continue to facilitate Thailand's human smuggling market by providing fraudulent travel and identification documents, particularly across shared borders between Thailand and its immediate neighbours.

Extortion practices in Thailand tend to be linked to abusive cybercrime content. Children and adolescents are acknowledged as being particularly vulnerable to such crimes, with online 'sextortion' of children having become a widespread concern in the country. There have also been reports of foreign workers facing extortion in the country. In other cases, local businesspeople become victims of such practices.

### TRADE

Thailand is a major transit point for arms trafficking, as weapons often pass through the country to reach Myanmar – where they are used by ethnic armed groups and criminals. Thailand is also a destination country for arms from Cambodia. The country is also becoming a source of

firearms due to the proliferation of online black markets, making it easy to access illicit handguns. Despite strict gun laws, licenses can be purchased from corrupt officials and discounted firearms are sold on the black market. The lack of commitment to countering arms trafficking is due in part to the involvement of many members of the security establishment. Thailand is also known for its expertise in firearm modification and craft production, which is being shared on social media and is spreading to neighbouring countries. Thailand ranks first in South East Asia in terms of civilian gun possession, with less than half of those guns being authorized. This has led to an increase in violence on the streets, including turf wars among street gangs. The crisis in neighbouring Myanmar is feared to be reviving the arms black market in Thailand. Additionally, it has been alleged that officials distribute illegal arms in the south of the country to protect itself from separatist rebels.

Counterfeit goods are also a serious issue in Thailand, with both domestic and foreign actors involved in the production and trade of fake products. Physical counterfeit goods are readily available, and e-commerce platforms and social media are increasingly being used as channels for this illegal trade. Thailand has been placed on a watchlist for intellectual property violations. The increase in demand for medical equipment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has fueled the production of counterfeit goods in Thailand, as well as the trans-shipment of illegal products from the country.

Thailand is also a major hub for the illicit trade of excise goods, including liquor, tobacco and playing cards. Both domestic and foreign criminals, as well as state-embedded actors, such as the police, are involved in this trade, with over a quarter of cigarettes sold in the country being illegal contraband. The profit from this trade is generated through local demand, with street vendors operating openly in Thailand's cities and towns. Recently, unrecorded alcohol consumption in Thailand has reached record highs, indicating high levels of illicit trade. The price of smuggled whiskey is half that of legally sold whiskey. The ban on the sale of alcoholic beverages during the COVID-19 pandemic has driven consumers to the black market. Despite efforts by public authorities, the illicit trade of excise goods remains a significant challenge for the country.

### ENVIRONMENT

Flora crimes are significant in the country, with profits accruing to both nationals and foreign criminals. The trafficking of rosewood is a major problem in eastern Thailand. Despite law enforcement efforts, illegal logging and trafficking of Siamese rosewood have been on the rise, allegedly transiting through Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam on its way to the Chinese market. There are also concerns

that government officials in charge of protected areas have contributed to deforestation by allowing illegal logging and timber trading.

Thailand also has one of the largest illegal wildlife trade markets in the world, involving a range of animals and products, such as African and Asian rhino horn, tiger skin, elephant ivory, pangolin, captive-bred tigers, reptiles, birds and mammals, including tiger cubs, bear cubs and primate babies. The country is a source, transit and destination area for these illegal wildlife trades, with Thailand's seaports and postal services facilitating deliveries to other countries, particularly China and Vietnam, where tourists are known to purchase illegal wildlife products. Tourism is a key driver of wildlife crime in Thailand, with unsuspecting tourists targeted by tour operators and guides who work with black market traders. The internet has become a significant channel for facilitating the trade of live animals, animal parts and wildlife products in Thailand, with social media being one of the most commonly used online platforms. Foreign organized criminal groups have been involved in poaching in Thailand, and corrupt state-embedded officials are known to play a role in facilitating illegal wildlife trafficking operations.

Thailand is an attractive transit and destination country for oil and fuel markets, as well as precious stones, due to its strategic location and multiple entry points. The country is a major market for gemstones, particularly rubies and sapphires, which may have been trafficked from their countries of origin by transnational organized crime networks. One smuggling route is from Myanmar to Thailand, where 'mules' carry a few gems at a time and deliver them to a dealer in a Thai border town after crossing an official border. Corruption of authorities may also be enabling the smuggling of non-renewable resources as, in some cases, smugglers pay bribes to officials, allowing them to cross the border. The illegal trade in precious stones poses serious environmental and human rights concerns, as it can lead to the exploitation of workers, and environmental degradation in source countries.

## DRUGS

Thailand is a transit and destination country for the heroin trade in South East Asia, with the Golden Triangle area, in particular, being heavily used for drug trafficking during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although Thailand has eliminated opium farming and heroin production, the latter continues in neighbouring Myanmar, with heroin and other drugs often being smuggled through Laos to Thailand and onwards. Corruption among officials in Thailand contributes to the heroin trade, and local heroin use has contributed to significant public health concerns, particularly in relation to the transmission of HIV and other blood-borne viruses. Thailand's cocaine-trafficking market is moderate and is dominated by international players and networks rather than domestic groups. West and East African criminal networks

heavily influence the cocaine market, with authorities conducting operations to disband cocaine-trafficking activities involving loosely organized crime groups with individuals from Guinea and Nigeria, as well as Thailand.

Thailand recently decriminalized cannabis, making cultivation, distribution, possession, sale and consumption legal, within certain regulations. The move is the latest step in Thailand's plan to promote cannabis as a cash crop, given that about a third of its labour force works in agriculture. Cannabis is cultivated domestically and constitutes a moderate criminal market. Conversely, the country is a major transit and destination hub for synthetic drugs, with methamphetamine, also known as 'Yaba', being the most used drug. Synthetic drug trafficking was significant during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the Golden Triangle area being a major route. The country is one of the main routes for methamphetamines from Myanmar reaching the Asia-Pacific region, with several shipments bound for Australia and Japan being seized recently. Technology has aided the illegal trade of synthetic drugs, which are sold on social media platforms and delivered by private delivery services. Thailand's borders are notoriously porous, and corruption among the country's police and border force is known to contribute to the market. Domestic and international criminal groups are involved in the synthetic drug trade, including those based in China, Taiwan and Myanmar. Over the past two decades, methamphetamines have supplanted opium and heroin to become the dominant illegal drug in the region, which is reflected domestically in Thailand. Although the total amount of methamphetamine seized has dropped, the country has seen a notable increase in supply, which has led to a sharp decline in prices.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cybercrime in Thailand has been on the rise lately, especially since the more widespread adoption and reliance on technology during the COVID-19 pandemic. Various industries have been affected, including legal services, construction, wholesale and retail, and healthcare. The main cyber threats expected to emerge are ransomware attacks, attacks related to the metaverse, the exploitation of flaws in application programming interfaces and critical infrastructure attacks. Among these, ransomware attacks are projected to become the most serious cyber threat. The country is vulnerable in this regard due to the absence of appropriate monitoring and reporting, which further exacerbates the problem. Critical digital infrastructure attacks are also considered key cyber threats facing the country, especially in the financial, utility and healthcare sectors, where confidential and lucrative data can be targeted by attackers.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Thailand is grappling with an escalating issue of financial crimes, including fraud, tax evasion and embezzlement. These crimes involve a range of individuals, from those embedded within the state to those in the private sector. Scammers have been able to utilize advanced technologies to perpetrate their activities, such as romance scams, Ponzi schemes and voice phishing scams. Criminal actors, both domestic and foreign, are involved in cyber-enabled financial crimes. Financial fraud and online shopping scams are the most frequently reported types of fraud. Criminals often use untraceable mule accounts to collect the proceeds of their crimes, and victims are often lured into investment schemes that promise unrealistic returns. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, call centre scams have increased significantly, with the country's elderly population being a target of such criminal activities. There is also evidence of a strong link between transnational human trafficking and industrial-scale financial fraud, with organized crime groups luring hundreds of people from across South East Asia, and around world, to engage in fraudulent activities.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

Foreign criminal groups have been operating in Thailand for over a century, and they currently engage in activities such as human and drug trafficking, and fraud through call centres. Thailand has long been known as a haven for foreign criminals, with the Golden Triangle serving as a centre for drug production and Vietnamese actors involved in smuggling elephant ivory, rhino horn and other endangered species. Currently, Chinese, Korean and Taiwanese criminals are significantly involved in online gambling and call centre scams based in Pattaya, with these targeting Chinese

nationals with false investment opportunities. There is no evidence about native Thai mafia-style groups. Rather, such groups operating in the country are linked to foreign criminal diasporas.

Criminal networks remain active in human trafficking, money laundering and drug trafficking across Thailand, with network members often involved in multiple areas of transnational crime. The recent reintroduction of local elections, after more than seven years, has sparked concerns about the return of criminal gangs, following a surge in violence linked to political actors using criminals to further their interests.

State-embedded corruption facilitates trafficking and undermines anti-trafficking efforts. High levels of perceived corruption have made NGOs hesitant to work with the government, and some police officers are suspected of compromising investigations and failing to provide sufficient evidence to prosecute trafficking cases. Law enforcement officials have been wary of investigating influential offenders, including those with connections to high-ranking government officials. Although some officials have been investigated for complicity in trafficking, the government has often relied on administrative punishments instead of criminal prosecution.

Transnational organized crime by Thailand's private sector is mostly conducted by small-scale, informal, loose and flexible networks. Such actors play various roles in criminal markets such as illegal fishing, human exploitation and romance, investment and phone scams. They may be forced to participate as active members of transnational criminal groups, or brokers who recruit economically vulnerable people with false promises of employment and a better life.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Governance and civil liberties in Thailand have been reportedly deteriorating. The government has been accused of suppressing opposition voices and pro-democracy protests, raising questions about its democratic stance. Although the government has expressed its willingness to combat organized crime, conviction rates remain low, and there are concerns about state involvement enabling smuggling and trafficking. Corruption suspicions have also arisen regarding COVID-19 vaccine procurement. While the government has made efforts to address cybercrime, critics argue that these efforts are being used as a pretext to curtail freedom of expression and censor online content. Corruption at the state level remains a major problem.

The government's transparency and accountability are hampered by ineffectual management and a reluctance to publicly disclose assets. High-level decisions continue to be made opaquely due to the military's influence on the government's legislative majority, leading to issues such as corruption, cronyism and nepotism. Bribery and gifts are also widespread in business, law enforcement and the legal system, creating systemic problems in tackling human trafficking, money laundering and other crimes.

Despite being party to treaties aimed at tackling transnational organized crime, Thailand has not made significant progress in combatting various criminal markets over the past two years. Rampant bribery of public officials and in law enforcement agencies, as well as the military's monopoly

control, pose significant challenges in combatting organized crimes, although policies and laws addressing criminal markets are in place.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

While judicial independence is guaranteed by the constitution, the courts in Thailand are widely seen as politicized and corrupt. The Constitutional Court, in particular, has been accused of favouring the military and has extensive powers, including the ability to dissolve political parties, overturn elected officials and veto legislation.

Despite specific laws to prevent organized crimes and several specialized anti-trafficking officers, various criminal markets remain at high levels in the country. The slow pace of police reform, as well as limited transparency within the force, has led to a general lack of trust in agents. Moreover, both the police and the military have been accused of widespread corruption and often act with impunity, which is further compounded by the lack of any laws explicitly prohibiting torture.

Thailand's numerous borders make the country vulnerable to smuggling and trafficking. And while its border agencies collaborate with their counterparts in neighbouring countries in combatting transnational crime, corruption remains a challenge to Thailand's territorial integrity. The police also lack the necessary capacity and equipment to effectively tackle cybercrime.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Thailand has been in the process of amending its anti-money laundering law to align it with internationally accepted policies and practices. The aim of these amendments is to strengthen regulation and investigation processes so as to combat increasingly complex money laundering schemes. The proposed amendments will subject crowdfunding platforms to increased scrutiny as they are deemed vulnerable to money laundering. The effectiveness of these measures remains to be seen.

Thailand's government is encouraging foreign investment by offering tax and non-tax incentives, making it easier for foreign investors to expand their presence in Asia. Certain initiatives have made significant strides in transforming the economy by prioritizing research, development, creative thinking and innovation. However, corruption and bribery continue to be pervasive in the business sector, and criminal groups are extending loans with interest rates that exceed the legal limit.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Thailand's government's efforts to identify and assist victims of human trafficking are moderate due to limited personnel, expertise and corruption. Although multidisciplinary teams have been established to identify and refer victims to support services, the implementation of these procedures has been inconsistent throughout the country. Additionally, the frequent rotation of police officers has prevented stable anti-trafficking expertise, and some officials fail to recognize trafficking cases. Despite these challenges, the government has established hotlines and one-stop services for victims of organized crime. While Thailand's government has made efforts to prevent human trafficking, and coordinate policies and strategies across agencies, these prevention methods may not be sufficient to address the scale of the problem, particularly the online sexual exploitation of children. Outreach activities have been conducted to raise awareness of trafficking among schoolchildren, teachers and community leaders.

Although Thailand's civil society remains vibrant, groups focused on defending human rights, promoting democracy and freedom of expression continue to face restrictions, criminalization and prosecution under sedition and lèse-majesté laws. Academic freedom is constrained, with universities monitoring and cancelling discussions on politically sensitive topics, and activist initiatives on campuses remain constrained. The government has introduced a new draft law that includes intrusive provisions to track the activities and resources of civil society organizations and seeks to impose new controls over civic space. While Thailand has made significant improvements in consolidating freedom of the press, this area remains weak.

---

*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.*