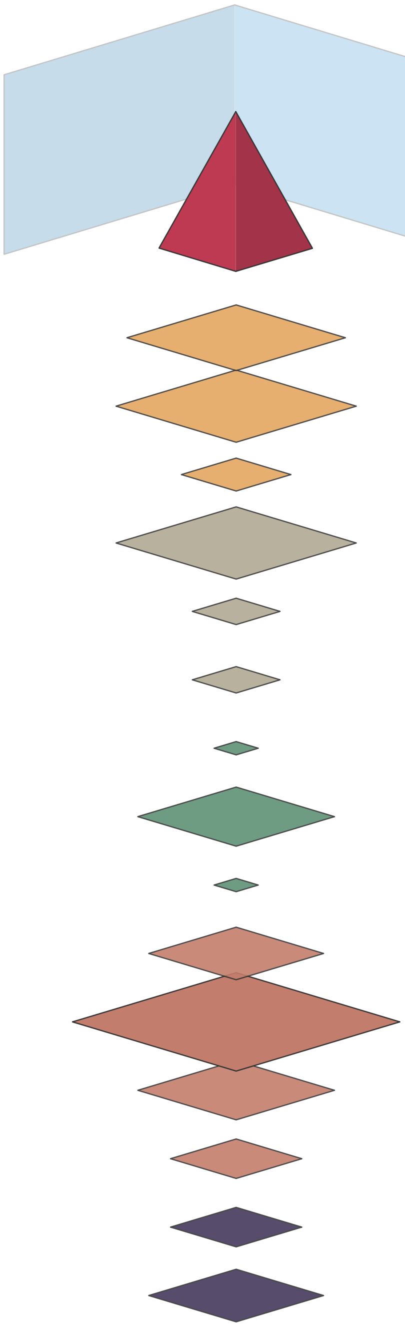
GLOBAL ORGANIZED CRIME INDEX

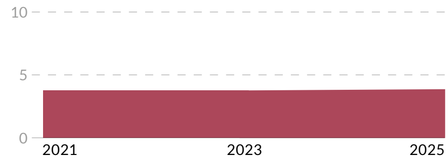
GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

BAHAMAS



3.88 ↗0.13
CRIMINALITY SCORE

157th of 193 countries ↗4
26th of 35 American countries -
5th of 13 Caribbean countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS	3.67	↗0.07
HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.00	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	5.50	0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	2.50	↗1.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	5.50	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	2.00	0.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	2.00	↗0.50
FLORA CRIMES	1.00	↘0.50
FAUNA CRIMES	4.50	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	1.00	↘1.00
HEROIN TRADE	4.00	0.00
COCAINE TRADE	7.50	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	4.50	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	3.00	0.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	3.00	↗0.50
FINANCIAL CRIMES	4.00	↗0.50

CRIMINAL ACTORS	4.10	↗0.20
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	4.50	↗0.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	3.00	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	3.00	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	6.50	↗0.50
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	3.50	0.00

This project was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State.

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Funded by the European Union

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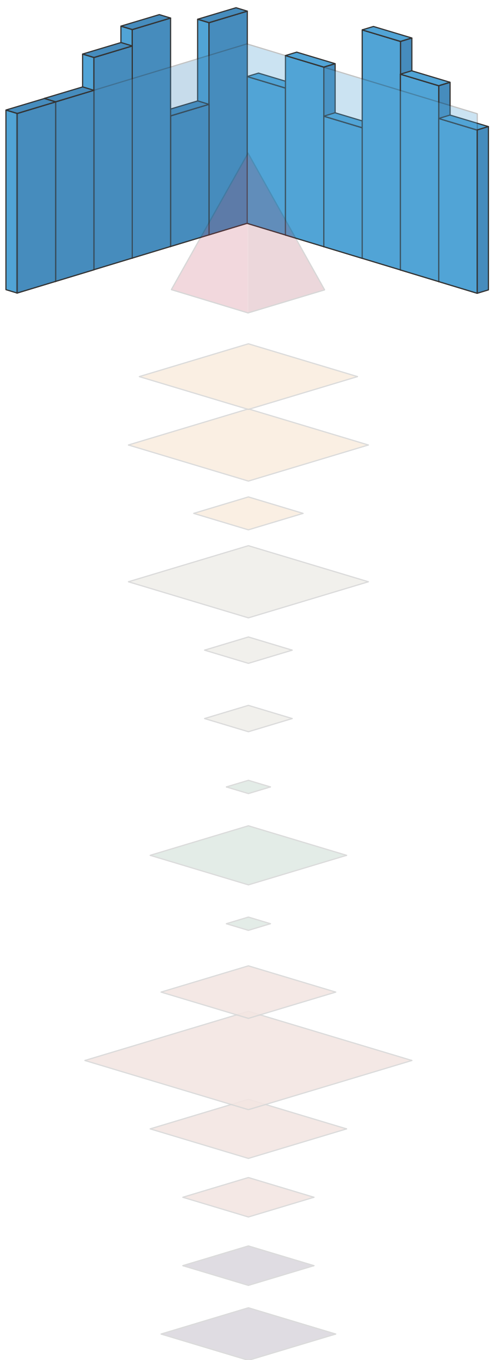
GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

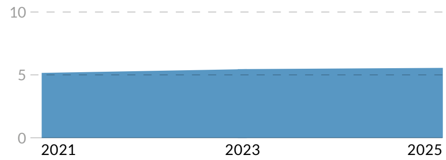
BAHAMAS



5.58 ↗0.08

RESILIENCE SCORE

50th of 193 countries ↗9
8th of 35 American countries ↗2
2nd of 13 Caribbean countries ↗1



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	**5.50**	↘0.50
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	**5.50**	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	**6.50**	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	**7.00**	↗0.50
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	**4.00**	↗0.50
LAW ENFORCEMENT	**6.50**	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	**4.50**	↘0.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	**5.50**	↗0.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	**4.00**	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	**7.00**	0.00
PREVENTION	**6.00**	↗0.50
NON-STATE ACTORS	**5.00**	0.00

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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking in The Bahamas continues to involve labour and sexual exploitation. Vulnerable populations – including migrants, asylum seekers, LGBTQI+ individuals and those affected by displacement or natural disasters – are especially at risk. Instability in neighbouring regions, particularly Haiti, has contributed to trafficking risks, exacerbating existing socio-economic vulnerabilities in The Bahamas. Foreign women, especially Haitian and Cuban nationals, are commonly targeted. Nevertheless, while criminal networks and sometimes state-embedded actors are known to facilitate trafficking, most incidents are carried out by individuals familiar to the victim – such as friends, family members or loved ones – rather than by transnational organized crime groups.

Human smuggling through The Bahamas is prevalent, particularly along maritime routes from Haiti, with notable activities in the north. While men were previously the primary victims, recent cases increasingly involve women and children. Haitian, Cuban and more recently Ecuadorian nationals – affected by instability and organized crime in their home countries – use The Bahamas as a transit point to the US. The human smuggling market is facilitated by criminal networks and complicit state actors, with some immigration officials implicated in document fraud. Smuggling operations have grown more clandestine, and migrants face exploitation and violence.

Extortion and protection racketeering affect both individuals and businesses, particularly in areas with a limited law enforcement presence. Organized crime groups engage in these practices, creating coercive environments where victims feel pressured to pay for protection to avoid harm, although the overall scale of these activities remains limited.

TRADE

Arms trafficking remains a significant criminal market in The Bahamas, largely fuelled by the steady influx of firearms from the United States – particularly Florida. The vast majority of firearms used in homicides and seized by authorities in recent years have been traced to US manufacturers, driving a surge in lethal violence, especially among gangs engaged in retaliatory attacks. While Bahamian authorities have demonstrated awareness of the issue – as evidenced by major seizures and high-profile arrests – and continue to cooperate with their US counterparts, efforts to stem the flow of illegal weapons have so far proven insufficient. Recent seizures of weapons and ammunition, alongside rising firearm-related economic costs, underscore the scale and impact of the problem on national security and public health.

Conversely, the trade in counterfeit goods remains limited, with no structured criminal organizations currently identified as key actors. Although national data on counterfeit goods is scarce, regional trends suggest a growing market that could lead to a possible future increase at the national level. Similarly, while an illicit market for alcohol, tobacco and other excise goods is reported to exist, concrete evidence regarding the structure and extent of organized criminal involvement remains limited. Alcohol and tobacco, specifically beer and hard liquor, are the most prominent items in this market. Information on broader black-market activity is scarce, but expert assessments suggest the state incurs substantial revenue losses annually due to smuggling, particularly in the alcohol and tobacco sectors.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora-related crimes are relatively rare in the country. Although there has been a rise in pine tree destruction over the past year – mainly driven by individuals producing charcoal for informal street sales – this activity is primarily associated with squatters rather than organized criminal networks. Meanwhile, organized fauna crimes remain a concern, with illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and exotic animal trafficking primary issues. This market is largely dominated by foreign commercial actors, particularly from the Dominican Republic, whose activities have created tension with local fishers and resistance to enforcement at sea. Moreover, while illegal extraction of stone and sand for construction purposes has been identified, current evidence suggests that the activity is carried out independently, without involvement from organized crime groups.

DRUGS

The heroin market in The Bahamas is relatively limited, with low volumes of seizures reported in recent years. Local consumption remains minimal, and independent sources indicate that heroin-related fatalities and cases of opioid addiction treatment are uncommon. However, The Bahamas remains a key transit point for cocaine smuggling, primarily from South America to the US. Despite low local demand, the country plays a significant role in international drug trafficking due to its proximity to the US and extensive maritime routes. Recent seizures suggest a rise in cocaine trafficking, with transnational networks using planes and boats to move drugs through the country. Corruption within Bahamian law enforcement is believed to contribute to the prevalence of the cocaine trade, with officers allegedly involved in criminal activities.

The Bahamas serves as both a destination and transit point in the cannabis trade. Locally, demand is met through domestic cultivation and imports from Jamaica, while cannabis from the US is also shipped for consumption. Significant seizures, especially of shipments originating from the US, have been reported. Overall, cannabis use is generally socially accepted.

Moreover, the synthetic drug trade, particularly fentanyl, is becoming a growing concern, with notable volumes of fentanyl pill imports and home-based production. Other synthetic drugs, such as MDMA, oxycodone and ecstasy, are often shipped via online orders. Although the market remains limited in scale, the lack of comprehensive reporting on synthetic drug-related incidents hinders a clear assessment of its true extent and impact.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

There has been a rise in hacking, cyber-extortion and data breaches in The Bahamas, particularly targeting public infrastructure and the financial services sector. Ransomware and banking account hacking are the most prevalent offenses. The increasing use of the Bahamian Sand Dollar, the government's own cryptocurrency, may also create risks of increased cyber-dependent crimes.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes, particularly credit card fraud, have been rising in The Bahamas, affecting both locals and tourists. Unauthorized transactions, such as online purchases and bank transfers, are becoming increasingly common. The country's status as a tax haven continues to attract organized crime groups, increasing the risk of fraud and tax evasion.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Gun violence in The Bahamas is primarily driven by community-based gangs competing for territorial control to sell drugs. Dominant groups include Tiger Nation – led from within prison – and the increasingly organized Grove Hot Gang. Other groups, such as One Order and Fire and Theft, also contribute to violence, though their influence remains largely localized. These gangs exhibit mafia-like characteristics, including identifiable leadership and territorial control, though the control over the areas in which they are established is limited. Rising youth unemployment has fuelled gang recruitment, while retaliatory violence has intensified. Meanwhile, looser criminal networks remain active across several illicit trades, including cannabis and cocaine trafficking, human trafficking and arms dealing. These groups typically operate within low-income communities, exerting control over small, localized areas. While violent, they don't appear to have significant influence over the country's democratic institutions or governance.

State-embedded actors in The Bahamas play a limited role in criminal markets. Nevertheless, corruption, especially among medium- and elite-level officials, remains a concern, leading to several prosecutions of police officers, prison officers and government officials for abuse of power. Notable recent cases include bribery and conspiracy charges tied to fraudulent government contracts involving former government figures. However, there is no substantial evidence that the government controls criminal markets. Corruption within law enforcement and immigration appears to be driven more by individual actions than state-driven enterprises.

Foreign criminal actors play a significant role in Bahamian criminal markets, particularly drug trafficking. Transnational criminal organizations, including Colombian and Mexican syndicates, use the country as a critical transit point for smuggling narcotics – especially cocaine – to the US. These groups, along with Italian mafias, also influence the heroin trade and human trafficking networks. The Bahamas' geographic location makes it strategically ideal for moving drugs, weapons and money between the Americas and Europe. While local gangs have limited contact with foreign actors, reports of violent individuals fleeing from Haiti to The Bahamas raise concerns about increased trafficking activity linked to ongoing instability in Haiti.

Private criminal actors remain active in financial crimes and money laundering, particularly through casinos and financial institutions. Some also engage in human smuggling and trafficking for labour exploitation.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The Bahamas maintains a stable political system but faces challenges in law enforcement, corruption and human rights. Rising concerns over crime and violence continue to effect public safety and have prompted the government to ramp up security and legislative efforts, though doubts persist with regard to their effectiveness. Meanwhile, government transparency and accountability have shown little improvement. Despite strong laws supporting public access to information, legal limitations reduce their effectiveness. Procurement processes lack transparency and political campaigns do not require financial disclosures. While some reforms, such as the repeal and replacement of the Public Procurement Act, aim to enhance governance, oversight remains weak. Corruption is pervasive, with many businesses reporting the need to pay bribes for permits. These issues, compounded by a sluggish economy and limited access to financing, hinder broader progress and fair business practices.

The Bahamas is party to several international agreements addressing organized crime, including conventions on human trafficking, arms trafficking and drug control. In recent years, the government has strengthened cooperation with international partners – particularly the US and neighbouring countries – to combat irregular migration, arms trafficking and drug smuggling. Notable efforts include the establishment of a US office to support arms trafficking investigations and participation in the Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network to combat poaching. Despite concerns about corruption, which hampers information-sharing efforts with foreign law enforcement, significant progress has been made in addressing money laundering.

Domestically, The Bahamas has enacted several laws to combat organized crime, including the Trafficking in Persons Act, Dangerous Drugs Act and Penal Code amendments targeting gang activity. The government also introduced bail reforms and new anti-gang legislation in 2024 to address gang-related violence, though opposition parties have criticized their effectiveness. While some progress has been made in environmental protection, such as the establishment of the Bahamas Wildlife Enforcement Network and other forest conservation measures, the country faces gaps in cybercrime laws and the regulation of synthetic drugs like fentanyl.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The Bahamas has limited judicial resources to address organized crime. The US Department of State supports local efforts to enhance investigative and prosecutorial capacities, but prison conditions and case backlogs remain issues of concern. The judicial system ensures due process but lacks a sufficient number of public defenders, especially for capital cases. The correctional system struggles with overcrowding, inadequate facilities, high recidivism rates and reports of abuse by officers. Efforts to modernize the judicial system and address delays include implementation of a Bail Management System and plans to appoint additional Supreme Court justices.

The Bahamas hosts the Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPF), a well-established law enforcement body with specialized divisions operating across New Providence, Grand Bahama and the Family Islands. These include Drug Enforcement, Criminal Records and the Serious Crimes Unit. In 2019, legislation established a National Crime Intelligence Agency, and in 2023, the Anti-Gang and Firearms Investigation Task Force was created to address organized crime. While the Bahamas Wildlife Enforcement Network tackles illegal resource extraction, fisheries inspectors lack enforcement authority. Law enforcement also struggles to address cybercrime, and a recent whistle-blower shooting underscored the risks officers face exposing corruption within the RBPF.

Overall, The Bahamas faces significant challenges in combating drug trafficking and irregular migration due to its vast geography, limited enforcement resources and proximity to the US, where demand for illegal substances is high. As such, the country struggles to prevent foreign vessels involved in illegal fishing and drug trafficking from entering its territorial waters. However, The Bahamas has strengthened cooperation with international partners, including INTERPOL and the Caribbean Community's Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, to improve its response capacity. Border security has been enhanced in light of political instability in Haiti, with increased investments in the Royal Bahamas Defence Force. Additionally, the country has been advancing its cybersecurity infrastructure through a national strategy and the development of a dedicated Computer Incident Response Team.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Bahamian banks and trust companies demonstrate a strong culture of anti-money laundering compliance, with only a small percentage of suspicious unsolicited client approaches accepted during the reporting period. Following a series of reforms, The Bahamas was removed from the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) Grey List of jurisdictions under increased monitoring and is now largely compliant with FATF recommendations. However, the country still faces challenges. As one of the wealthiest Caribbean nations, the Bahamian economy relies heavily on tourism and offshore banking – sectors susceptible to money laundering through real estate, precious metals, stones and financial services. Despite implementing reforms such as a new Public Procurement Act and an eProcurement platform, opaque investment procedures continue to hinder the country's investment climate. Overall, the economy is considered moderately free by international standards.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

In recent years, The Bahamas has demonstrated a strong commitment to combating human trafficking and prioritizing victim protection, including by increasing training for officials and continuing to prosecute traffickers. Although there is no dedicated shelter for trafficking victims, the country provides accommodations and refers victims to NGOs. The Ministry of National Security operates a 24-hour trafficking hotline, and courts ensure victim confidentiality. Victim-centred protocols guide responders, and support services such as witness protection are in place. The government continues to collaborate with international organizations and NGOs and supports efforts to identify fraud victims through the Financial Intelligence Unit.

To reduce crime, the government has also implemented the Citizens Security and Justice Programme, focusing on violent crime prevention, youth unemployment and justice sector improvements. The programme engages youth through organizations like the Royal Bahamas Defence Force Rangers and Police Force Cadets. The police force is also enhancing community policing efforts, while a National Cyber Resilience Strategy was launched to address cybercrime, including via public awareness campaigns.

As a stable democracy with strong political and civil rights, The Bahamas hosts various local and international NGOs working to address issues like organized crime. However, they have been insufficient at eradicating the issue, and non-state actors lack significant influence in combating such crimes. NGOs also play a role in addressing fauna crimes and gender-based violence by supporting law enforcement efforts and providing community outreach. While the media reports on organized crime, it does so with limited detail, and defamation remains a criminal offense despite press freedom being constitutionally guaranteed.

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.