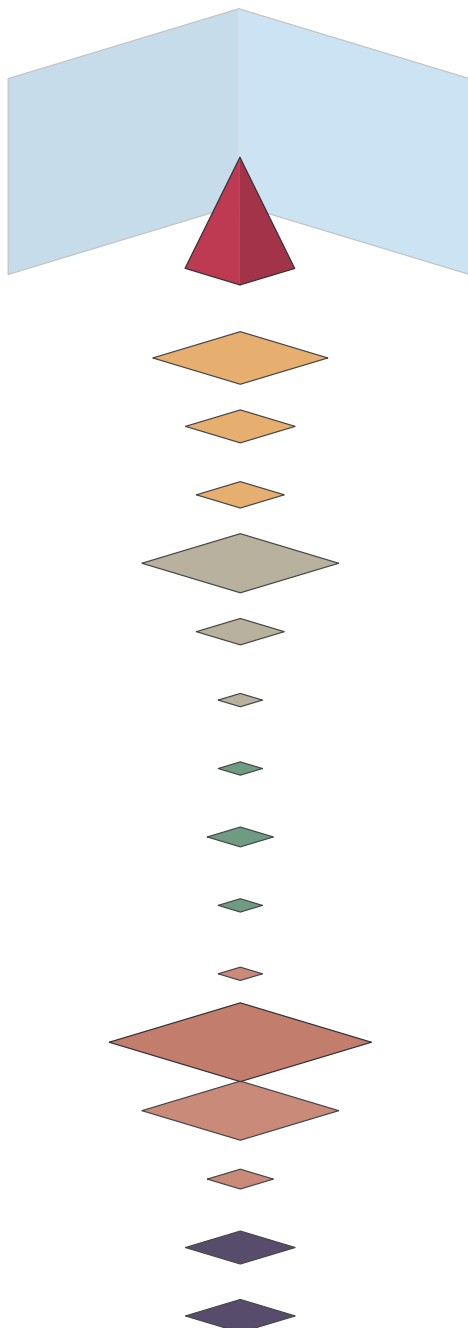


# BARBADOS



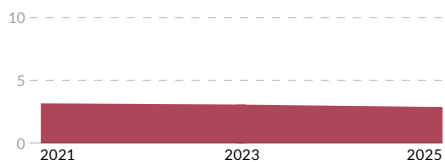
2.90  $\nearrow 0.17$

## CRIMINALITY SCORE

177<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  $\searrow 2$

32<sup>nd</sup> of 35 American countries -

10<sup>th</sup> of 13 Caribbean countries -



## CRIMINAL MARKETS

2.50  $\nearrow 0.07$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	4.00	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	2.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	2.00	0.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	4.50	$\searrow 0.50$
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	2.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	1.00	0.00
FLORA CRIMES	1.00	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	1.50	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	1.00	$\searrow 1.00$
HEROIN TRADE	1.00	0.00
COCAINE TRADE	6.00	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	4.50	$\searrow 0.50$
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	1.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	2.50	$\nearrow 1.00$
FINANCIAL CRIMES	2.50	$\nearrow 0.50$



## CRIMINAL ACTORS

3.30  $\searrow 0.40$

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	5.00	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	4.00	$\searrow 0.50$
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	3.00	$\searrow 1.00$
FOREIGN ACTORS	3.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	1.50	$\searrow 1.00$



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

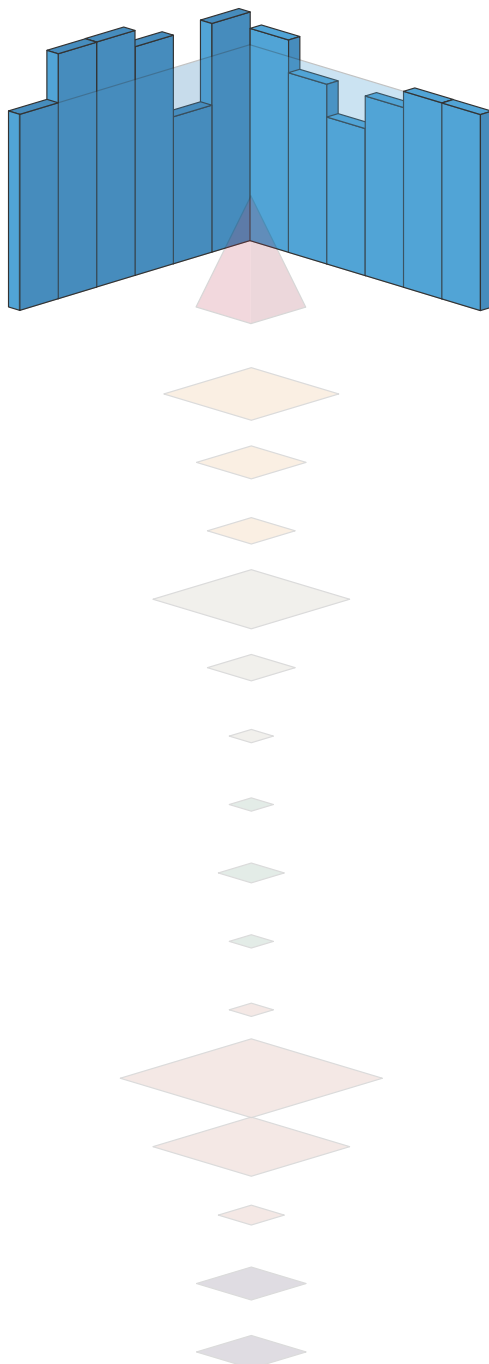


Funded by  
the European Union

ENACT is funded by the European Union  
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affiliation with the Global Initiative Against  
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# BARBADOS



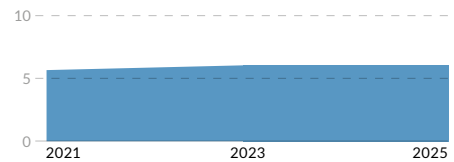
6.13<sub>0.00</sub>

## RESILIENCE SCORE

35<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  $\downarrow 1$

5<sup>th</sup> of 35 American countries -

1<sup>st</sup> of 13 Caribbean countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	6.00	0.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	7.50	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	7.50	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	7.00	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	4.50	$\downarrow 0.50$
LAW ENFORCEMENT	7.00	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	6.50	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.50	$\uparrow 0.50$
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	4.50	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	5.50	0.00
PREVENTION	6.00	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	6.00	0.00



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# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Human trafficking in Barbados remains present, though relatively limited in scale and scope – primarily involving sex and labour exploitation – with no major changes in its structure. Sex tourism continues, and migration for commercial sex has returned to pre-pandemic levels. Individuals from several Caribbean and South American countries – particularly undocumented migrants – are at heightened risk of labour exploitation. Traffickers increasingly operate independently, using social media and digital tools to recruit victims. Human smuggling is a related concern, although there is no clear evidence of market consolidation or recent incidents. However, regional instability, especially in Haiti, could influence these activities.

Economic conditions, meanwhile, attract irregular migrants who are at an increased risk of exploitation through practices such as document retention and movement restrictions. Moreover, while extortion and racketeering exist in Barbados, reported cases remain limited. Recent trends indicate that high-net-worth individuals are increasingly targeted by criminal groups for opportunistic gains, a pattern also observed in other Caribbean Community states.

### TRADE

The arms trafficking market in Barbados has shown little structural change in recent years. Most firearms originate from the US, and there is minimal evidence of alternative sources or trafficking routes. However, recent arrests involving seizures of both firearms and drugs suggest a potential convergence of these markets. While domestic production is negligible, improved law enforcement efforts appear to have disrupted access to illegal weapons, contributing to measurable reductions in violent firearm-related incidents.

The counterfeit goods trade is active in Barbados, with items such as luxury apparel and watches frequently sold through informal channels like street vendors, roadside stalls and online platforms. While the market is limited in scale, enforcement of intellectual property rights remains weak. There is no evidence of an organized criminal market for excise goods.

### ENVIRONMENT

There is no formal criminal market for flora-related crimes in Barbados. Similarly, fauna crimes also show no signs of structural change or market consolidation. However, concerns persist regarding illegal fishing and poaching – issues which have been exacerbated by the increasing vulnerability of the country's ports. Additionally, while not pervasive, instances of poaching of protected species, such as sea turtles listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, have been reported. Several cases have involved the illegal harvesting of hawksbill turtles for their meat and eggs. There is no evidence of an organized or structured criminal market for non-renewable resources.

### DRUGS

The heroin trade remains fragmented, with no evidence of structured distribution networks or significant domestic consumption. Reports indicate that heroin use is minimal and primarily associated with transient populations, including tourists, rather than residents. In contrast, the cocaine trade is prevalent in Barbados. The country is a transit point, though not a major one, for regional cocaine trafficking. Recent cocaine seizures indicate a partially consolidated market, with trafficking – which has links to Venezuela – occurring primarily via boat.

Barbados is one of the Caribbean's top locations for cannabis seizures, with significant quantities destroyed during the reporting period. Despite decriminalizing small cannabis possession in 2019, the market has become increasingly consolidated. Experts suggest that decriminalization has diminished cannabis's value, transforming it from a major commodity to street currency. There is little evidence indicating a well-established market for synthetic substances. Nevertheless, a warning regarding the emergence of a new synthetic drug signals the existence of a potentially nascent synthetic drug trade.

### CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-attacks have been on the rise, with Barbados registering high numbers of distributed denial-of-service and ransomware attacks. Local reports warn of an expected increase in cyber-attacks, with incidents affecting both public and private sectors. Despite its growth, the overall impact of this market remains limited.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

While financial crimes are not widespread, Barbados faces challenges related to cyber-enabled financial fraud originating both domestically and internationally. Common crimes include advance fee scams, Ponzi schemes and various types of bank fraud targeting residents.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

Barbados hosts a significant gang presence, with groups such as Dawg Pound, Red Sea and The Dungeon involved in a range of criminal activities, including drug and arms trafficking, robbery and violence. While these gangs do not control territory, they operate under structured leadership, and there are concerns about their recruitment of vulnerable children. Efforts to address violence in the country include discussions among gangs aimed at establishing a truce and reducing violence, particularly gun-related incidents. These gangs also maintain connections with regional criminal networks, suggesting transnational influences in their operations. Less-structured criminal networks in Barbados are primarily engaged in the trafficking of firearms, drugs (notably cocaine and cannabis) and human trafficking. However, details about the groups involved – specifically in human trafficking – remain unclear. Ongoing cocaine

trafficking suggests that the key players in the drug trade have remained largely consistent over time.

State-embedded actors remain a concern, though their influence appears limited rather than systemic. Reports suggest that low-level officials accept bribes to facilitate trafficking operations, and there are indications that certain politicians may be influenced by gang leaders. Recent incidents also highlight state actors' involvement in financial crimes. Similarly, foreign actors play a limited but notable role in Barbados's criminal markets, particularly human trafficking, arms smuggling and drug trafficking. For example, arms trafficking primarily involves US weapons, with US nationals profiting from the trade while laundering occurs abroad. Drug trafficking, especially of cocaine and cannabis, is largely controlled by foreign actors, with Venezuelan nationals implicated in shipments – often using vessels flagged from Venezuela. European nationals, including those from the UK and Norway, have been linked to smuggling operations connecting Latin America, the Caribbean and Spain, underscoring the transnational nature of these networks.

With regard to private sector actors, there is little evidence of their involvement in organized crime, except for anecdotal and sporadic reports of money laundering.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Barbados is actively addressing organized crime, particularly human and drug trafficking, through both international cooperation and domestic efforts. The country has renewed its commitment to combat maritime trafficking and signed several key global agreements. Despite this progress, concerns remain over issues including gang violence and slow criminal prosecution times. In response, a new organized crime unit has been created, though it faces opposition. Notably, the country has experienced a significant decline in homicides and violent incidents. However, challenges such as gun violence, with a surge in murders in 2024, persist. Political stability and governance indicators remain strong, but experts call for more comprehensive crime prevention strategies.

The current administration has made strides in curbing corruption, including by improving public procurement and strengthening anti-corruption measures. New legislation was enacted that requires cabinet members to declare their assets, addressing previous gaps in integrity laws. The government has focused on fiscal transparency and good governance, yet some critics highlight flaws in legislative and

investigative processes. While Barbados is a leader in the Caribbean for its anti-corruption efforts, concerns persist regarding issues including bribery, lack of transparency and growing public perception of corruption.

Barbados has strengthened its international cooperation efforts to combat organized crime, working closely with regional and global partners. The government has worked with organizations such as the EU and the International Organization for Migration to address transnational crime and corruption. Barbados participates in initiatives like the PACE Justice programme, which is aimed at reducing criminal justice backlogs, and cooperates with the US and UK on asset forfeiture and strategic police assessments. The country has also worked with the US and Trinidad and Tobago to combat arms and drug trafficking. In 2024, Barbados hosted a significant crime-fighting dialogue, further reinforcing its role in global policing efforts.

Domestically, Barbados has enacted several legislative measures to combat organized crime. These include a 2023 bill that addresses cybercrime and enhances international cooperation, and the Firearms Amendment Act, introduced in January 2023, which increased penalties for firearms

offenses. In 2024, the government began advancing legislation to streamline maritime border procedures and prevent illegal entry using fraudulent documents. The Bail Bill 2024 seeks to limit bail access for individuals who have committed serious crimes. Cannabis possession was decriminalized in 2019. However, intellectual property enforcement remains an issue. Despite taking steps to revise its copyright laws, Barbados remains on the US Watch List.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Barbados' judicial system faces significant challenges, with slow and outdated procedures leading to lengthy prosecution times. Despite partnerships with the EU, the UN Development Programme, the US and the UK through the PACE Justice programme, progress has been limited. Additionally, while the government has sought to address prison overcrowding and abuse, prison conditions remain poor. Analysts indicate that systemic deficiencies in both the judicial and prison systems continue to hinder the effectiveness of criminal justice reform.

The Barbados Police Service is a well-resourced agency that focuses on combating organized crime – particularly drug trafficking – and works closely with international and national partners, including the Barbados Coast Guard. The government created a Serious Organized Crime Unit to tackle gang violence and drug trafficking, though experts have raised concerns over its resource demands and potential for corruption. In response to rising crime in 2023, the government established new police outposts, which helped reduce criminal activity in certain areas. The PACE Justice programme has supported law enforcement efforts. However, the increase in violent crime has raised concerns about the safety of probation officers and crime prevention challenges.

Barbados' main concerns with regard to border security are its ports and water routes, where illicit drug and human trafficking have occurred. The government maintains high security at ports, but introduced the Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic Bill in 2024 to enhance port operations and combat trafficking. In response to increased gun smuggling, new surveillance measures were implemented at ports in 2024, focusing on improved technology to monitor firearm imports. Despite authorities successfully thwarting threats at Grantley Adams International Airport, some reports suggest vulnerabilities in both maritime and air routes. There is an emphasis on collaboration between law enforcement and the public to strengthen security.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Barbados was removed from the Financial Action Task Force's Grey List for money laundering in February 2024 following revisions to its Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism National Plan. The country faces challenges as a transit hub for illegal

substances, contributing to money laundering concerns. To address these issues, Barbados has established the Anti-Money Laundering Authority and a Financial Intelligence Unit to monitor financial institutions and prevent illicit financial activities. Despite improvements, however, money laundering remains an issue.

Barbados has a moderately free economy, although global assessments reflect challenges in labour freedom and the potential for illicit activity alongside legal businesses. The country relies on tourism and international finance and promotes foreign investment through flexible regulations. In response to concerns about rising crime, particularly gun violence, business leaders launched a crime-fighting initiative to improve security and foster cooperation with law enforcement. The government also established minimum wage rates for construction workers on public contracts to promote fairness and transparency amid rising national debt, which has exceeded the size of the economy.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Barbados has continued its efforts to combat human trafficking and increased victim screenings, though no new victims were identified. NGOs played a critical role in victim care, with a formal referral system facilitating collaboration between these organizations and the government. The Gender Affairs Bureau coordinated support, such as insufficient shelter resources for female victims, though challenges persisted. Male victims received accommodations through separate agreements with NGOs, while child victims were placed under the care of the Children's Care Board. In contrast, while no major progress was made in addressing drug abuse – despite calls from the National Council on Substance Abuse for gender-specific interventions – the Council did launch a programme that uses group therapy sessions to address marijuana use among adolescents.

In recent years, Barbados has intensified its efforts to tackle organized crime, particularly firearms and human trafficking. The country participated in regional initiatives aimed at reducing illicit firearms flows and bolstering law enforcement capacity. Despite a public awareness campaign and enhanced police training, Barbados has not yet secured convictions for human trafficking. Prevention programmes focus on youth empowerment, conflict resolution and addressing the root causes of violence. The Barbados Police Service has committed to increasing efforts to reduce gun violence, emphasizing community involvement and intelligence sharing. Religious organizations also contribute to crime prevention through cross-sector collaboration.

Barbados is regarded as a free country with robust civil liberties, an active civil society and an independent media landscape. The government collaborates with various non-state actors – including NGOs, private sector associations and youth groups – to address critical national issues such as firearm-related crime, violence prevention, crime

reduction and policy development. The media operates freely, comprising both private and state-run outlets. Additionally, journalists have received training on topics such as youth involvement in crime. However, a proposed cybercrime bill has raised concerns, particularly over its potential implications for freedom of expression.

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