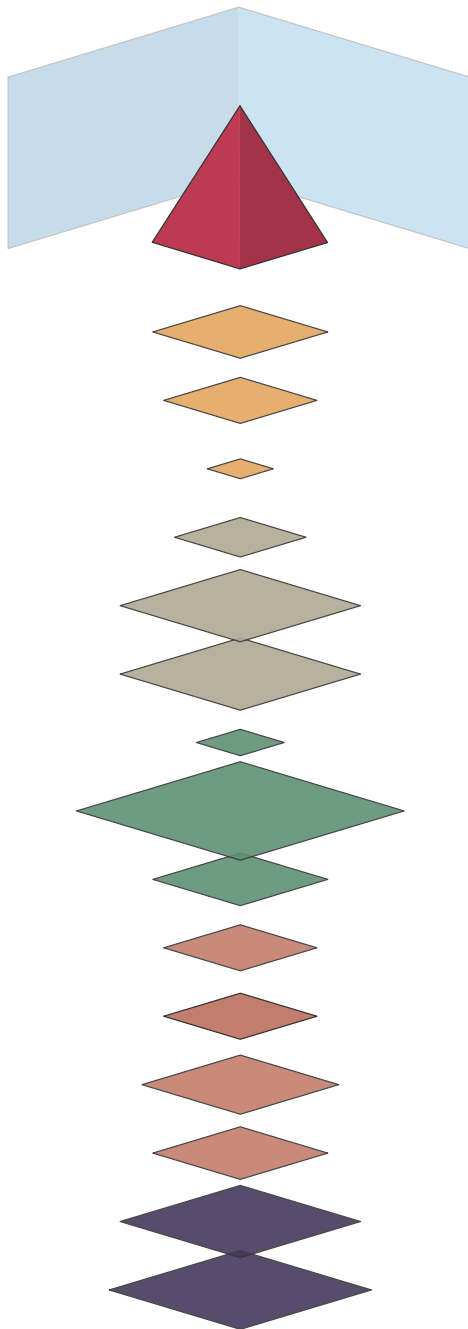
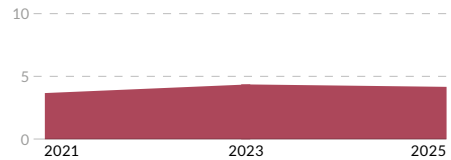


BOTSWANA



4.17 $\downarrow 0.18$ **CRIMINALITY SCORE**

145th of 193 countries $\downarrow 5$
47th of 54 African countries $\downarrow 1$
10th of 13 Southern African countries $\downarrow 1$



CRIMINAL MARKETS **4.23** $\downarrow 0.17$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	4.00 $\downarrow 0.50$
HUMAN SMUGGLING	3.50 0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	1.50 $\downarrow 2.50$
ARMS TRAFFICKING	3.00 $\downarrow 1.00$
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	5.50 $\uparrow 0.50$
ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	5.50 0.00
FLORA CRIMES	2.00 $\downarrow 0.50$
FAUNA CRIMES	7.50 0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	4.00 $\uparrow 0.50$
HEROIN TRADE	3.50 0.00
COCAINE TRADE	3.50 0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	4.50 0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	4.00 0.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	5.50 $\uparrow 0.50$
FINANCIAL CRIMES	6.00 $\uparrow 0.50$



CRIMINAL ACTORS **4.10** $\downarrow 0.20$

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00 0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5.50 0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	4.50 $\uparrow 0.50$
FOREIGN ACTORS	5.50 0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	4.00 $\downarrow 1.50$



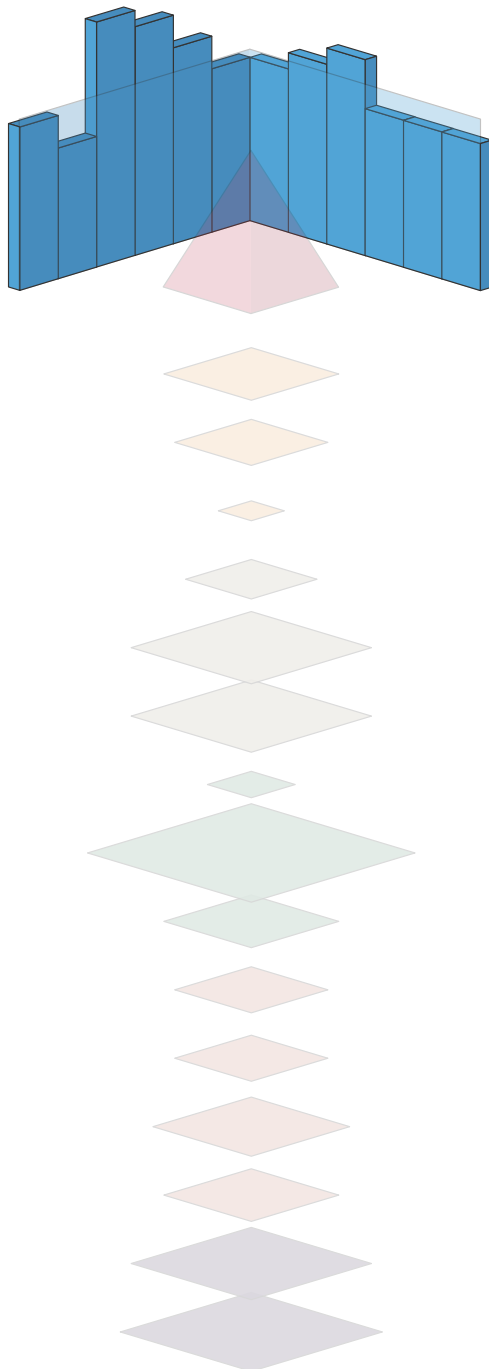
This project was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State.



Funded by the European Union

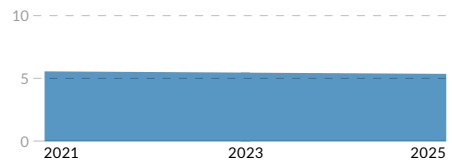
ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

BOTSWANA



5.38 ↘0.08 **RESILIENCE SCORE**

62nd of 193 countries ↘2
6th of 54 African countries ↗1
3rd of 13 Southern African countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	5.00	0.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	4.00	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	7.50	↘1.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	7.00	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	6.00	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.00	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	5.00	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.50	↗0.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	6.00	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	4.50	0.00
PREVENTION	4.50	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	4.50	↘0.50



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking is an issue in Botswana, which is a source, transit point and destination for trafficking victims. Traffickers exploit vulnerable populations, particularly children and individuals from impoverished rural areas, and undocumented migrants. The agricultural sector is a key site for labour exploitation, using children to herd and rear livestock and complete other farming activities. Individuals are trafficked for commercial sex, particularly along major highways used by long-distance truck drivers. There have been isolated reports of sextortion, particularly targeting newly arrived Zimbabwean domestic workers. These cases typically involve coercion by employers or intermediaries who exploit migrants' vulnerable legal and economic status.

Human smuggling persists, largely driven by economic hardships in neighbouring Zimbabwe. Botswana is a destination and a transit country for smuggled individuals, and Zimbabweans are the primary group attempting to enter the country irregularly. Migrants from Ethiopia and other countries use Botswana as a transit point to reach South Africa. Recent changes in Zimbabwe and Botswana's visa requirements have contributed to confusion about border controls, further incentivizing the risk of smuggling. Border officials have intercepted smuggling attempts but reporting inconsistencies and confusion between human trafficking and human smuggling incidents make it difficult to assess the full scope of the issue.

Extortion and protection racketeering are not deemed to be widespread and there are only anecdotal reports of such activities.

TRADE

Arms trafficking is a limited concern in Botswana. Instances of arms smuggling have been recorded but the country lacks comprehensive legislation addressing this issue. Law enforcement has encouraged voluntary surrender programmes for illicit firearms, yet Botswana remains a transit country for arms smuggled into the region. Criminal activities involving illegal firearms are escalating.

The trade in counterfeit goods is a notable and expanding criminal market. Counterfeit pharmaceuticals, in particular, are on the rise, driven by regional medicine shortages. Criminal networks and private actors are involved in this illicit trade, and Botswana is a transit point for smuggling to South Africa as well as a destination country. Chinese communities play a notable role in the counterfeit goods

market, importing products from Zhejiang and Fujian provinces in China. Fake branded footwear and other consumer goods are sold in urban markets, contributing to the entrenchment of counterfeit trade. In recent years, there has also been an increase in counterfeit cigarettes.

Illicit trade in excisable goods, particularly alcohol and tobacco, has resulted in substantial economic losses for the state. State-embedded actors are reportedly involved in facilitating this criminal market, which is assisted by weak coordination among government agencies. Zimbabwe is the primary source of illicit tobacco products and cigarettes are sold at one-third of the legal price.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora crimes are relatively limited in Botswana, a generally arid country with sparse vegetation. Where logging occurs, it is primarily for domestic use, such as firewood and charcoal production. In isolated incidents, Botswana is mainly a transit country for timber being smuggled from neighbouring countries to South Africa, eventually destined for European and Asian markets.

Fauna crimes – particularly rhino and elephant poaching – are a significant issue in Botswana, with the rhino population nearly eliminated. Organized crime groups from Zambia and Zimbabwe have been involved in targeting elephants for their ivory, and significant numbers of killings are reported annually. The northern region and Chobe National Park have been particularly affected. Botswana is also a source country for the illegal trade of wildlife products, and poached elephant tusks are trafficked through Zambia before reaching Asian markets. Other targeted species include spiny lizards. Additionally, cattle rustling along the Botswana–Zimbabwe border is a major challenge, with organized groups operating in many regions.

Non-renewable resource crimes, particularly involving gold and fuel smuggling, are becoming more prevalent. Illegal gold mining in Francistown and Matsiloje has overwhelmed local law enforcement and significant numbers of arrests have been reported in recent years. Foreign criminal gangs from the region are suspected of coordinating these operations. Fuel smuggling, facilitated by criminal networks and state-embedded actors, has also increased, and significant tax revenue losses have been attributed to illicit fuel trade between Botswana and Zimbabwe. Diamond smuggling is a concern, though Botswana's adherence to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme has helped reduce the trafficking of conflict diamonds.

DRUGS

Heroin use is a growing concern in Botswana, though the country is primarily a transit point for heroin moving between Asia, Europe and the rest of southern Africa. To make the drug more affordable, traffickers often mix heroin with cannabis.

Nigerian criminal networks play a key role in the expanding cocaine trade. Botswana is increasingly used as a transit hub for Andean cocaine destined for Zambia and Zimbabwe. Permeable borders and instances of official complicity facilitate the movement of cocaine on land and air routes. South Africa is a source and a destination country, using Botswana as a trafficking corridor. The scale of the cocaine trade is unclear due to limited state capacity in monitoring and assessing the criminal market.

Cannabis is the most widely used illicit drug in Botswana. Informal businesses such as carwashes and tuckshops distribute cannabis, and its presence has been reported in schools. Some cannabis is trafficked to European markets but most is consumed locally. Botswana is a source, transit and destination country for cannabis and its supply chains are linked to South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho and Mozambique.

The synthetic drug market, while still emerging, is showing signs of growth. Methamphetamine use has been recorded. Johannesburg and Cape Town are the main centres for meth importation, production and distribution in South Africa, with supply routes extending through Pioneer Gate border post along the Trans-Kalahari Corridor into Botswana. The meth market is small but growing, and Gaborone is the primary distribution hub. Most meth is smuggled overland from Johannesburg by Nigerian syndicates. Allegations that Chinese workers drive local demand are largely anecdotal and unverified. Domestic production is minimal, though small-scale labs may occasionally appear using chemicals imported through Walvis Bay in Namibia. Overall, meth remains relatively accessible in and around Gaborone. Mandrax is also trafficked through Botswana en route to South Africa.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cybercrime is an escalating concern in Botswana and key government institutions and corporate entities are frequently targeted by cyber-attacks. Foreign actors and criminal networks are suspected of orchestrating most of these attacks, including incidents involving hacking and ransomware. Enforcement agencies have struggled to contain cybercrime despite the existence of a national cybersecurity strategy, citing limited technical capacity and resource constraints.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes are a well-established criminal market in Botswana. Fraud, phishing, tax evasion and embezzlement are pervasive and state-embedded actors are often implicated. Tax evasion has contributed to substantial revenue losses and financial authorities have reported a marked increase in suspicious transactions over the past year. Cyber-enabled fraud in the financial services sector has escalated, perpetrators increasingly relying on forged or stolen identities to facilitate illicit transactions. The presence of private and foreign actors in these schemes complicates law enforcement efforts, straining the country's regulatory capacity and increasing citizens' vulnerability.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

There is no evidence of traditional mafia-style groups operating in Botswana. The organized crime landscape is characterized by loosely affiliated criminal networks rather than rigid hierarchical structures. These networks operate in several illicit markets, including human trafficking, human smuggling, arms trafficking, the trade in counterfeit goods, illicit excisable goods and fauna crimes. They are predominantly decentralized and opportunistic, taking advantage of porous borders with Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa to facilitate transnational criminal activities. Violent incidents, particularly those associated with fuel smugglers and poachers near the Zimbabwean border, highlight the potential for escalating criminal activity. The interconnected nature of these networks enables them to adapt quickly, smuggling illicit goods and people across borders with relative ease.

Public sector corruption in Botswana is widely perceived as a significant issue and there are growing concerns about the involvement of state-embedded actors in organized crime. Evidence suggests that corruption is prevalent among border control personnel, facilitating the smuggling of illicit goods and people. High-level officials have been implicated in various corruption scandals, raising concerns about the extent to which state-embedded actors enable organized criminal activities.

Foreign criminal actors play an important role in Botswana's organized crime landscape. The most prominent groups include Zimbabwean, Chinese, South African and Nigerian actors, each group being involved in different criminal markets. Nigerians exert considerable influence over the drug trade, particularly in recruiting locals to smuggle narcotics across borders. Zimbabweans are involved in the illicit trade of excisable goods and non-renewable resource crimes, and operations are concentrated along Botswana's borders with South Africa and Zimbabwe. Incidents of violent crime spilling over from South Africa have also been reported. Chinese firms have been linked to bribery and corruption, particularly in securing government contracts, and some companies reportedly gain favourable treatment

despite lower financial and technical evaluations. Sir Seretse Khama International Airport is frequently exploited as a transit hub for foreign criminal actors facilitating illicit trade.

The private sector in Botswana has been affected by corruption, particularly in the construction industry, which is heavily reliant on government tenders. Reports indicate that this sector is also being used for money laundering. Botswana's informal financial sector, which includes unregulated microfinance businesses, savings groups (metshelo) and unregistered social clubs, poses

challenges to efforts aimed at mitigating money laundering risks. The absence of advanced financial oversight tools at border crossings facilitates the movement of illicit funds through cash couriers and unregistered financial intermediaries. Botswana's close economic ties with high-risk neighbouring countries also increase its exposure to financial crimes. However, major cases of deep organized crime penetration within the private sector have not been reported in recent years.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Botswana's political landscape underwent a significant shift in 2024 when the November election ended the long-standing rule of the Botswana Democratic Party. The transition was peaceful, reinforcing the country's democratic stability. The new administration has signalled a commitment to economic reforms, including a stronger focus on social welfare and economic equity, though continuity is expected in key economic sectors such as diamond mining. Botswana's governance structure is largely stable, bolstered by the kgotla system, which facilitates community participation. Although organized crime is not a political priority, the government has taken steps to counter it.

Government transparency and accountability are mixed. The new administration pledged a zero-tolerance approach to corruption after youth-led protests demanding the prosecution of officials accused of embezzlement. The Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime has reported an increase in corruption cases but its effectiveness is questionable due to its direct reporting line to the president's office. Botswana's lack of access-to-information legislation restricts media and public oversight, though efforts to introduce such legislation are ongoing. Reports indicate a growing public perception of corruption, and a significant proportion of the population believe officials as high up as the executive branch of government are engaged in corrupt practices. This perception worsened over the past decade, contributing to declining trust in governance structures.

Internationally, Botswana is engaged in combating organized crime. It is a signatory to key international treaties, including the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. The country has demonstrated regional cooperation, particularly in tackling wildlife crimes and arms trafficking, through initiatives with Namibia and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs. It cooperates with INTERPOL and Afripol in intelligence-sharing efforts to combat transnational

crime. However, Botswana continues to face serious coordination challenges with neighbouring countries in addressing cross-border crimes.

National policies and laws targeting organized crime are evolving but face implementation gaps. The Anti-Human Trafficking Act differentiates trafficking from smuggling and recent amendments have introduced stricter penalties for sex trafficking. A five-year national action plan was launched in 2023 to combat trafficking, though its impact remains to be seen. However, the legislative approach has been stronger in addressing fauna crimes than in tackling human trafficking, arms smuggling and the trade in counterfeit goods. Cybersecurity laws are being revised to address digital crimes more effectively, but delays in implementation have raised concerns about data privacy and cybercrime enforcement.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Botswana's judicial system is perceived as largely functional, yet concerns about judicial independence persist. There are allegations of executive influence over court rulings and claims that government-linked cases are assigned to judges known for ruling in favour of the administration. Despite these concerns, Botswana has specialized courts for corruption and stock theft. Regarding the penitentiary system, overcrowding has not been an issue in recent years. Additionally, there have been no significant reports of prison or detention centre conditions raising human rights concerns.

While law enforcement in Botswana is relatively effective in combating organized crime, its efforts are hampered by limited personnel and a lack of specialized training, particularly in cyber and financial crimes. The Botswana Police Service enjoys relative public trust but the Directorate of Intelligence and Security is widely viewed with suspicion, and there have been reports of journalists being detained

without warrants. Nevertheless, Botswana has made strides in wildlife crime enforcement with the launch of wildlife forensic laboratory in Kasane. The government has established a Drug Enforcement Agency to address drug trafficking and consumption concerns, and recent convictions indicate a level of effectiveness.

Botswana faces a range of border security challenges, largely due to its vast, sparsely populated land borders that are difficult to monitor effectively. These porous borders are exploited by criminal actors involved in drug and human trafficking, as well as cross-border crimes such as cattle rustling. The situation is further complicated by the presence of private landowners, particularly cattle ranchers, who restrict access to their land, limiting law enforcement's ability to patrol border areas. The country is also a transit route to South Africa, a major hub for criminal flows, which increases Botswana's exposure to transnational crime. Infrastructure and personnel for border control are inadequate, and some border officials are perceived as corrupt, undermining enforcement efforts. To address these issues, in 2024 the Botswana Defence Force launched a joint initiative with Namibia to raise awareness about illegal crossings, poaching and smuggling. Botswana lacks sufficient capacity to counter cyber threats. A series of cyberattacks in 2023 targeted key national institutions, and further attacks on media outlets in early 2024 disrupted digital services. These incidents highlight the growing vulnerability of Botswana's cyber infrastructure alongside its physical border security challenges.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Botswana has made progress in anti-money laundering measures and the Financial Intelligence Agency has played a critical role in compliance and oversight. The country was removed from the Financial Action Task Force grey list in 2021 after implementing reforms, though it is under enhanced follow-up. Transparency in financial transactions has improved, particularly in areas of beneficial ownership and legal arrangements, but the effectiveness of financial investigations into organized crime is unclear.

The economic regulatory environment in Botswana supports legitimate businesses but faces structural challenges. The government has introduced initiatives to enhance private sector development. Botswana has relatively high economic freedom but its reliance on diamond revenues and slow economic diversification hinder broader financial resilience. High unemployment and growing inequality contribute to an environment where economic crimes, such as money laundering, pose risks. Efforts to regulate financial activities are uneven and there are gaps in monitoring informal financial networks and cross-border transactions.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Victim and witness support services in Botswana are largely managed by civil society organizations rather than the state. The government has increased funding to NGOs assisting trafficking victims but a formalized victim referral system has yet to be implemented. The lack of structured labour recruitment regulations exposes migrant workers to exploitation, particularly in sectors such as domestic work and agriculture. Botswana's five-year anti-human trafficking action plan emphasizes victim protection, legal aid and reintegration programmes; however, its tangible impact is unclear as implementation progresses.

Prevention measures against organized crime are supported by legislation. However, limited resources and weak institutional coordination hinder their effectiveness. Moreover, insufficient labour inspections in high-risk sectors, such as agriculture, further weaken Botswana's ability to prevent forced labour and child exploitation.

Non-state actors, including civil society organizations and the media, operate under increasing constraints. Civil society organizations collaborate with the government on wildlife conservation efforts but their broader role in governance is limited. They have also taken a more proactive role in raising awareness and calling for stronger digital cybersecurity measures. The government maintains significant control over state-owned media, the president's office overseeing public TV and radio broadcasting policies. Privately owned broadcast media is regulated by the Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority, which operates under government oversight. Concerns have grown over restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom. The country has seen a decline in serious abuses against journalists, but their work still faces many obstacles.

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.