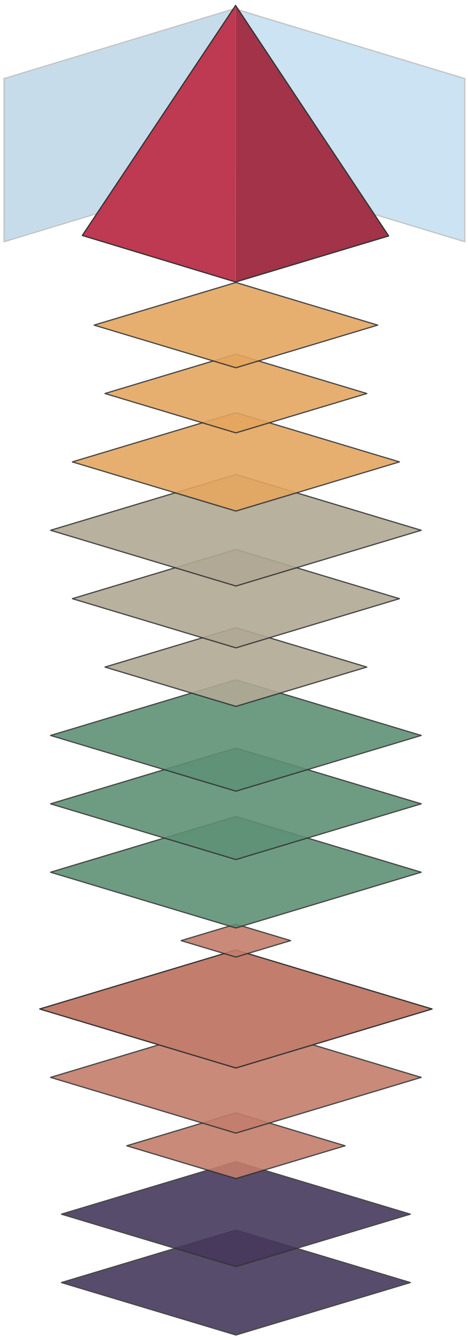
GLOBAL ORGANIZED CRIME INDEX

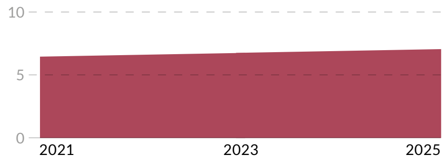
GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

BRAZIL



7.07 ↗0.30 CRIMINALITY SCORE

14th of 193 countries ↗8
6th of 35 American countries ↗1
4th of 12 South American countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS	7.23	↗0.30
HUMAN TRAFFICKING	6.50	↗0.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	6.00	↗0.50
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	7.50	↗0.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	8.50	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	7.50	↗0.50
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	6.00	↗1.00
FLORA CRIMES	8.50	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	8.50	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	8.50	0.00
HEROIN TRADE	2.50	0.00
COCAINE TRADE	9.00	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	8.50	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	5.00	↗0.50
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	8.00	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	8.00	↗1.00

CRIMINAL ACTORS	6.90	↗0.30
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	8.00	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	7.00	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	8.50	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	4.00	↗0.50
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	7.00	↗1.00

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

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.

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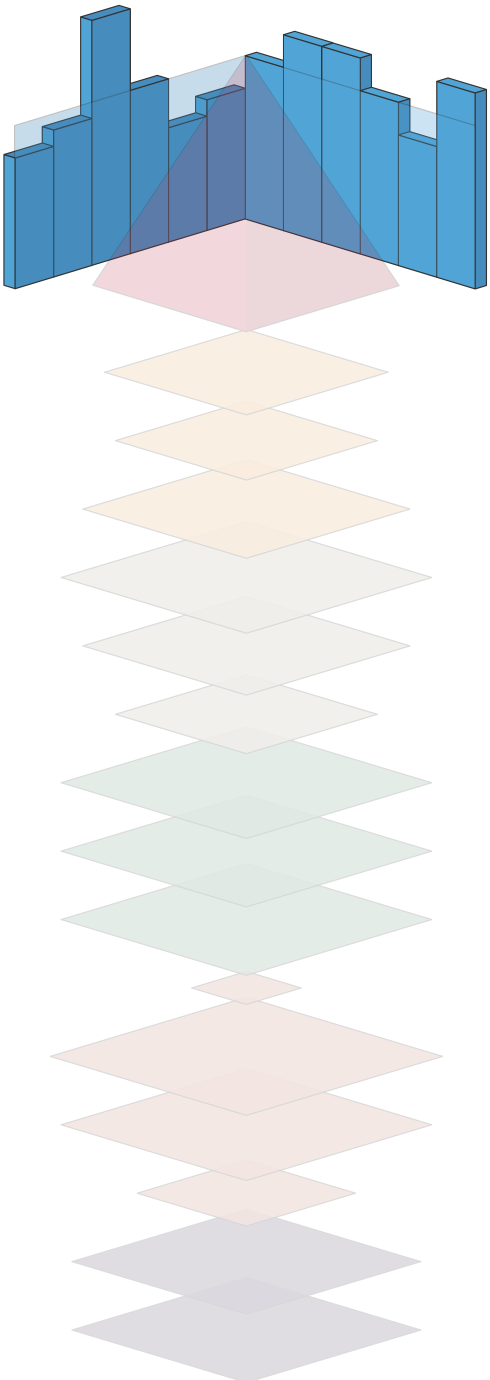
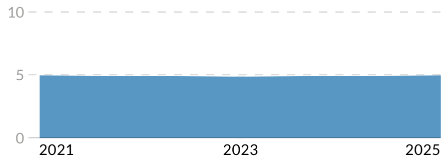
BRAZIL



5.04 ↗0.12

RESILIENCE SCORE

86th of 193 countries ↗8
17th of 35 American countries ↗1
5th of 12 South American countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	**4.00**	↗1.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	**4.50**	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	**7.50**	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	**5.00**	↗0.50
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	**3.50**	↗0.50
LAW ENFORCEMENT	**4.00**	↘0.50
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	**5.00**	↘0.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	**6.00**	0.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	**6.00**	↗0.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	**5.00**	0.00
PREVENTION	**4.00**	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	**6.00**	0.00

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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Brazil is both a source and destination country for human trafficking, with victims exploited for sex work and forced labour. Brazilian victims are targeted by organized criminal groups domestically and internationally and are frequently found in trafficking networks in Spain and Italy. Victims from elsewhere, primarily Bolivia, Venezuela, Haiti, Paraguay, the Philippines and China, are exploited within Brazil. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking, especially in the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina. Fraudulent recruitment for labour opportunities in South East Asia has led to forced labour in cyber-scam operations in Cambodia and China. Labour trafficking is rife within Brazil. In urban centres, Brazilian and foreign workers are subjected to servitude in construction, factories, restaurants and the hospitality industry. Forced labour is also widespread in sugarcane production, mining, logging, textile factories and wine production, as well as domestic work, which particularly affects migrant women and children. Brazilian children are vulnerable to clandestine adoption and sale to foreign buyers and to child sex tourism.

Brazil serves as a major hub for human smuggling in the region, acting primarily as a transit country for individuals – especially from Venezuela and Haiti – moving through South America. In recent years, Brazil has also become a waypoint for smuggled South Asian migrants, particularly men from Vietnam, India and Nepal en route to the United States. Taking their instructions from coyotes, these individuals travel through Europe or Western Asia before landing in Brazil. From there, they embark on a perilous route from Acre to Peru, traversing South and Central America via Panama and navigating the dangerous Darién Gap to reach Mexico. The journey continues through Mexico to the United States. Smuggled South Asian migrants also enter Brazil from its northern border with Guyana. South Asian smuggling networks often operate within their own countries, luring individuals with false job promises in Brazil before subjecting them to debt bondage or slave-like working conditions.

Extortion and protection racketeering are entrenched, particularly in urban centres where police-backed militias charge for protection services. They exploit police resources to coerce payments in extortion practices that target miners, business owners, local politicians and residents. While Brazil's most influential mafia groups such as the Comando Vermelho (CV) and the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) particularly dominate this criminal market, they are known to refrain from involving regular citizens.

TRADE

Arms trafficking is significant in Brazil, as the country is both a consumer of and a transit point for illicit firearms. Weapons are primarily sourced through theft from state stockpiles and private owners, with police officers often acting as intermediaries. Criminal groups like the PCC and the CV procure arms, often using legitimate companies that import arms from Croatia, Türkiye, Slovenia and the United States, using Paraguay as a key transit point. An increase in legal firearm ownership during the previous administration exacerbated the illicit arms trade, with criminal factions exploiting regulatory loopholes to acquire semi-automatic rifles. In fact, criminal groups used such loopholes to legally buy arms through individuals with no criminal records.

The counterfeit goods market has expanded, with the alcoholic beverage industry particularly affected in recent years. A significant portion of distilled spirits produced in the country is now made illegally, a trend that has grown notably in recent years due to high taxation on the domestic industry and the devaluation of the Brazilian real. Clothing, medicines, agrochemicals and electronic goods are also frequently counterfeited, with supply chains linked to China, Paraguay and Guyana. Criminal networks, including drug traffickers, are particularly involved in the counterfeit agrochemical trade. These networks control smuggling routes from Paraguay to Brazil, moving counterfeit pesticides alongside drugs, while goods from northern neighbours enter via river ports like Belém and those bound for Bolivia come by road. Counterfeit products are also produced domestically in Brazilian cities such as Ribeirão Preto, Franca, São José do Rio Preto, and Goiânia.

The illicit trade in excise goods, particularly cigarettes, remains a major issue in Brazil, driven by factors such as tax policies and the social acceptance of smuggled products. Brazil plays a key role in the illicit tobacco trade, especially in the tri-border region with Paraguay and Argentina, where most Paraguayan cigarettes are smuggled into Brazil. This trade is deeply intertwined with money laundering, political corruption, and gang activities within the region. Criminal groups like the PCC have become increasingly active in this highly lucrative market, reinvesting drug proceeds into contraband cigarettes, while militia groups in Rio de Janeiro profit from selling irregular cigarettes in their territories. In Brazilian cities, illegal cigarettes often outsell legal ones due to significant price differences. Smugglers have adapted to enforcement efforts by developing complex, multi-country routes, including via Bolivia, Suriname, and Panama, and rely on clandestine ports where workers are often co-opted by criminal networks to bypass inspections. E-cigarettes have also emerged as a growing segment of the illicit market, particularly in the cross-border area of

Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, despite their sale being unauthorized in Brazil. Millions of e-cigarettes have been seized nationwide, yet demand continues to rise, with millions of Brazilians using unregulated products.

ENVIRONMENT

Illegal logging and deforestation cause severe economic and ecological damage, with losses from Amazon deforestation alone estimated in billions of dollars annually. Highly valuable timber species such as brazilwood and ipê are trafficked to North America, Europe and China, often through fraudulent documentation. Organized crime groups, including the PCC and the CV, engage in logging, land grabs and political corruption to maintain control over timber supply chains. The previous administration's dismantling of environmental and indigenous protection agencies worsened the situation, creating a power vacuum to be filled by crime syndicates. Although the current administration has introduced improved policies aimed at reducing deforestation, resulting in some initial progress, systemic challenges remain. Ongoing collusion between corrupt officials and criminal actors continues to undermine the full effectiveness of these reforms. Fauna crimes are rampant, with Brazil serving as a source country for illegal wildlife trade. Parrots, exotic fish and endangered species such as Lear's macaws and golden lion tamarins are smuggled internationally, often via Suriname, Guyana and Peru. Each year, millions of animals are illegally taken from the wild in Brazil, with around 90% dying during capture and transport and only 10% reaching the end consumer, highlighting the cruelty of the trade. Brazil is estimated to account for 5%–15% of global wildlife trafficking. The internet has become a critical tool for wildlife traffickers, enabling them to reach a wide audience while remaining anonymous. Digital platforms have fuelled the rise in wildlife trafficking, with major seizures revealing increasing links between criminal networks and international buyers. These animals were sold predominantly via social media, often accompanied by forged documents.

Illegal mining continues to be widespread in Brazil. Gold mining, particularly in Yanomami and Tapajós territories, is driven by high global prices, weak enforcement and sophisticated smuggling operations. Brazil's gold supply chain lacks transparency, allowing illegally mined gold to enter the legal economy. The surge in gold prices over the past five years, coupled with weak law enforcement and a poorly regulated market, has exacerbated the issue. Estimates of illegal miners in indigenous Amazonian territories range from 4 000 (official) to as many as 20 000 (NGOs and indigenous leaders). Other illicitly extracted resources include diamonds, cassiterite and tantalum, with cross-border smuggling networks linked to Venezuela, Guyana and Colombia. Sand trafficking has also emerged as a lucrative crime, notably along the Preto River in São Paulo, in militia-controlled areas of Rio de Janeiro, and in Bahia and Paraíba.

DRUGS

Brazil is a major hub in the global cocaine trade due to its location near key drug-producing countries and its extensive transport networks. The Amazon region has become a primary entry point, with traffickers using its rivers to move shipments toward Atlantic ports for export, mostly to Europe. Cocaine seizures have increased significantly, with authorities intercepting large shipments throughout the year. Ports and private aircraft are commonly used for smuggling, and international criminal networks collaborate with Brazilian groups to facilitate trafficking. Law enforcement efforts have led to arrests and asset seizures, but the trade remains highly active. Cocaine moves through two main routes: one integrates shipments into agricultural exports and the other exploits weak surveillance in the Amazon. Organized crime groups dominate the trade, using expanding networks to move drugs internationally. Brazil is also one of the largest consumers of cocaine and crack cocaine, with a widespread domestic market controlled by criminal organizations. The drug trade fuels violence and is linked to other illicit activities, including arms trafficking and vehicle theft. Criminal groups continue to expand their reach, using alternative routes and partnerships to evade law enforcement.

Brazil is a major consumer of cannabis, primarily sourced from Paraguay, though domestic cultivation is increasing. The cannabis trade plays a critical role in funding criminal organizations, particularly in urban centres. Most marijuana in Brazil is of low quality and often transported in compressed form for discretion, but demand for higher-grade cannabis, including imported varieties, is rising. Wealthier consumers drive demand for premium products from Europe, Africa and the United States. Criminal groups involved in the cocaine trade, such as the PCC and the CV, also control marijuana distribution, using the same channels as the cocaine trade, with production managed by Paraguayan and Colombian organizations. Law enforcement efforts have had an impact on the operations of criminal networks, yet marijuana remains widely accessible, with prices varying across regions.

Brazil is experiencing a rise in synthetic drug seizures, particularly fentanyl, which is increasingly produced in the country and distributed through postal services. Often mixed with other substances, fentanyl poses unknown risks to users. Synthetic drugs like ecstasy, pink cocaine and ketamine are becoming more prevalent, especially in party culture. Brazil plays a key role in international smuggling networks, with raw materials entering through ports, airports and land borders. Some synthetic drugs are diverted from pharmaceutical sources or smuggled from Mexico, highlighting ties between Latin American criminal organizations. Law enforcement and research institutions are working to improve detection and prevention efforts. Reports indicate an overall increase in synthetic drug seizures and overdoses in an evolving drug landscape.

The heroin market in Brazil is limited. It is not a common street drug and is rarely used due to its high cost and low market availability.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Brazil faces a growing cybercrime threat, with attacks increasingly targeting individuals and businesses. A major data leak in early 2024 exposed sensitive information about millions of people, and ransomware and banking trojans are persistent threats. Brazil is a key target for cyberattacks in Latin America, accounting for a significant share of regional incidents. Banking trojans originating in Brazil have come to dominate the global landscape, filling the gap left by Eastern European cybercriminals who have shifted to ransomware. Businesses report frequent breaches, often disrupting access to critical data. Efforts to counter cyberthreats continue, but vulnerabilities remain widespread across sectors.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes in Brazil are widespread, encompassing corruption, tax evasion, embezzlement and fraud. Tax fraud remains significant, with mis-invoiced illicit flows representing a substantial portion of GDP. Authorities have dismantled schemes involving front companies and fraudulent income tax claims. Investment fraud has also increased, hitting pension funds, investors and state development agencies. Cyber-enabled financial crime, including identity fraud, online scams and financial fraud, has increasingly become prevalent, with many schemes operated from within prisons. Financial fraud has significantly impacted various sectors, including retail, e-commerce and insurance, with over USD 1.5 billion lost to scams during the reporting period. Fraudulent gambling apps and phishing scams exploit citizens. Such illicit financial flows support organized crime.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Organized crime in Brazil is dominated by the PCC and CV groups, which have expanded beyond prisons into transnational operations. They engage in drug and arms trafficking, smuggling, money laundering and illegal mining, and collaborate with foreign criminal organizations across Latin America, Europe and Africa. The PCC operates as a decentralized network, while the CV maintains a hierarchical structure with territorial control. Both groups recruit in prisons and exert political influence through corruption and money laundering. Their activities destabilize urban and border regions, fuelling violence and economic crime. Law enforcement faces ongoing challenges as these groups entrench themselves in international drug networks, financial systems and governance structures.

Brazil faces an escalating challenge from organized crime, with numerous criminal factions operating both inside and outside prisons. These groups display a range of structure and fluidity. Criminal networks are expanding activities in the Amazon region, which has intensified the violence and strengthened transnational connections, particularly in drug trafficking and environmental crimes. Beyond narcotics, criminal networks engage in illegal mining, arms trafficking, bank robbery and money laundering. Many maintain alliances with political figures, using illicit funds to influence elections.

Throughout the country, a range of law enforcement, military and civilian state officials form groups that profit from a variety of illicit trades, including drugs, mining, environmental crimes and financial crimes. Brazil's paramilitary militias, primarily composed of current and former security forces, are the most influential state-embedded criminal actors. These have also become dominant actors, surpassing traditional gangs in territorial control. Concentrated in Rio de Janeiro's marginalized areas, they exert de facto authority, extorting residents and monopolizing services such as utilities, transport and real estate. Collusion with other state officials allows these groups to evade law enforcement while infiltrating political institutions and shaping electoral outcomes. Some militias have recently allied with drug traffickers, expanding into the narcotics trade. Their capacity for wielding violence and co-opting administrative structures underscores their systemic entrenchment, making them a key driver of Brazil's organized crime landscape and a significant factor in the country's persistently high levels of violence.

The country's organized crime landscape is deeply entangled with foreign criminal organizations which collaborate with or compete against domestic groups like the PCC and the CV. Italian mafias (notably the 'Ndrangheta) and Balkan networks facilitate transnational drug and arms trafficking, money laundering and territorial disputes. Venezuelan gangs exploit migration routes to expand into Brazil's northern regions, forming alliances for drug and gold trafficking, as well as human exploitation. Peruvian and Bolivian groups, alongside dissidents from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, establish cocaine supply routes into Brazil. Nigerian, Chinese and Albanian mafias engage in diverse illicit activities, from financial crimes to illegal resource extraction. Diasporas play key roles in counterfeit markets and public-transit mafias, reflecting long-standing criminal-economic ties between Brazil and global actors.

The private sector in Brazil facilitates large-scale money laundering and illicit financial flows. Criminal organizations integrate illegal funds into legitimate sectors such as public transportation, agriculture and healthcare. Investigations reveal that bus operators, hospital suppliers and auto-parts businesses act as conduits for laundering illicit proceeds. The gold-mining sector, with international links, plays a key role in financial crimes, particularly through Guyanese actors. Banks, fintech firms and currency exchange companies facilitate these operations, with some institutions primarily engaged in illicit finance.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Brazil faces persistent challenges in combating organized crime, with lethal violence levels comparable to conflict zones. Although the country recorded its lowest homicide rate in over a decade in 2024, it still leads in absolute numbers, and violence remains concentrated in states like Bahia. Conviction rates for homicide remain low, and gang activity continues to fuel crime, particularly in urban centres and the Amazon. The current administration has prioritized security by reversing firearm deregulation and launching targeted programmes to counter organized crime, drug trafficking and environmental crimes. Initiatives such as the National Programme to Counter Organized Crime and the Security Action Programme aim to enhance policing and judicial cooperation. Federal law enforcement has also focused on curbing illegal gold extraction and smuggling. Despite these measures, police violence has surged in some regions, and organized crime networks maintain significant territorial control.

Corruption is a major issue, with political entanglements limiting enforcement against criminal groups. Militia influence in local governance and electoral interference by crime syndicates weaken the rule of law. Despite Brazil's regulatory frameworks and systems to combat corruption, systemic weaknesses in transparency and accountability persist. With institutional complicity enabling criminal networks, perceptions of corruption in the country have worsened. Reports indicate that judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officials have ties to organized crime. Judicial decisions, including the suspension of fines and relaxed rules for political appointments, raise further concerns about setbacks. However, recent anti-corruption efforts include overturning secrecy orders and tax reforms to reduce bribery.

Recognizing the complexity and scale of the security crisis, the Brazilian government has begun mobilizing international support. Diplomatic efforts are underway to engage neighbouring countries and global partners in developing a coordinated and strategic approach to combat drug trafficking and organized crime. Joint operations with European law enforcement have led to arrests related to drug trafficking. In August 2023, Brazil revived a regional treaty organization to enhance multilateral efforts against illegal mining and logging, although gaps remain in addressing environmental crime. Agreements with Paraguay, Germany, Ecuador, China and France target drug and arms trafficking, money laundering and illegal deforestation. A continental police cooperation body was formally established in 2023, with Brazil in a leadership role.

Despite Brazil's limits on federalist law enforcement, the current administration did enact security measures in its first year. Stricter arms controls reduced civilian firearm access, increased taxes and restricted certain weapons. Illegal mining crackdowns expelled miners, strengthened enforcement and improved gold-trade transparency. A security initiative established 34 Amazon police outposts to combat drug trafficking and environmental crimes. A national programme boosted policing, inter-agency cooperation and border security. A 2023 decree reinforced federal and military coordination against organized crime. Tougher human trafficking laws increased penalties, aligning with international protocols. Wildlife crime laws remain outdated, while drug policies face legal debates. New regulations target synthetic drugs, cybercrime, corruption and financial fraud.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Brazil's judiciary, while maintaining independence in several areas, struggles with inefficiency, external pressures and limited oversight, particularly in rural regions. Prosecutors rarely investigate police misconduct, contributing to a pervasive culture of impunity. Reports of judicial corruption, including judges linked to criminal organizations, further erode institutional integrity. The prison system, one of the world's largest, is overcrowded and deeply infiltrated by organized crime, serving as a recruitment ground for criminal factions. Criminal groups operate across most states, exerting influence within and beyond prison walls. Despite efforts such as the creation of a national penal police force, authorities face persistent challenges in controlling prison-based organized crime.

Brazil's law enforcement system has deep structural challenges, with police members often implicated in criminal activities. Police corruption and a lack of oversight contribute to widespread misconduct, including extrajudicial killings and collusion with militias. Where the government has taken legal action against human trafficking and cybercrime, a militarized approach to policing has led to violent clashes and continued abuses of power. Institutional divides between military and civil police exacerbate inefficiency. Public trust remains low due to perceptions of political bias, underfunding and systemic racial disparities. Despite efforts to bolster law enforcement, crime groups in many areas remain better equipped than the authorities.

Organized crime is a major issue in Brazil, particularly in border regions, cities and seaports. Vast, unmonitored land and river borders enable illicit activities. The Amazon's dense forests and river networks facilitate organized crime. Tri-border areas, serve as hubs for transnational crime, including illegal mining and environmental offences. Criminal groups exploit poorly monitored waterways to transport illicit goods, with ports like Porto Vila do Conde linked to drug smuggling. The Amazon is now a focal point for crime, with increasing violence in key municipalities.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Brazil has established a legal and institutional framework, led by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, to combat money laundering through national strategies, training programmes and specialized units. Yet challenges persist, particularly in corruption-linked laundering schemes using trade-based methods and informal transfers. Enforcement has improved, but prosecutions are slow and gaps in coordination hinder effectiveness. Recent regulations that aim to curb illicit financial flows in gold transactions mandate stricter monitoring and compliance from mining and financial institutions.

Brazil's high crime and violence levels are significant deterrents to investment. The challenging business environment also includes complex tax regulations and heavy state involvement in the economy. Economic policies dismantled under the previous administration have been reinstated, and a recent tax reform seeks to strengthen federal oversight and curb tax avoidance. Regulatory agencies at the federal level maintain strong oversight in key sectors, although state-level regulators are more vulnerable to criminal influence.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Brazil's victim assistance framework for human trafficking remains fragmented, with significant gaps in protection and support services. The country lacks a centralized database, making it difficult to track victims and assess service effectiveness. Multiple agencies collect victim data, but inconsistent methodologies limit coordination. There are no specialized shelters or funding for long-term victim support at the federal level. Instead, victims rely on general services, such as healthcare and literacy programmes, which vary by location. São Paulo does operate two trafficking victim shelters. The national drug policies encompass health promotion related to drugs, early intervention, treatment, social integration of marginalized communities and recovery support. The federal witness-protection programme covers a small number of individuals annually but lacks clear guidance for participants seeking anonymity.

The current approach to organized crime prioritizes enforcement over prevention, with limited awareness campaigns that address human trafficking, sex trafficking or child sex tourism. Localized initiatives have reduced violence, but broader strategies are lacking. In August 2024, Brazil introduced a new national plan targeting trafficking for forced labour and sexual exploitation, alongside new anti-trafficking units. Drug prevention campaigns face criticism for their repressive approach and lack of evidence-based strategies. The government is exploring social interventions in the Amazon, but their impact remains uncertain. The country's central bank has introduced enhanced security measures, including new norms to improve fraud prevention by reducing information asymmetry. Recent reports have identified weaknesses in Brazil's whistle-blower protections, particularly for private-sector employees reporting foreign bribery.

Civic space is relatively open, but NGOs working with land rights and environmental protection face significant risks, including harassment and violence. Environmental activists and journalists who investigate illegal activities in the Amazon are particularly vulnerable. With organized crime expanding its presence in the Amazon, indigenous communities also experience severe threats. International bodies have expressed concern over rights violations, particularly against indigenous and Afro-descendant populations. Press freedom is challenged by attacks on journalists as well as media concentration and disinformation, despite improved government relations. While the state investigates police violence and corruption, civil society plays a central role in crime prevention research, as authorities remain resistant to external input.

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