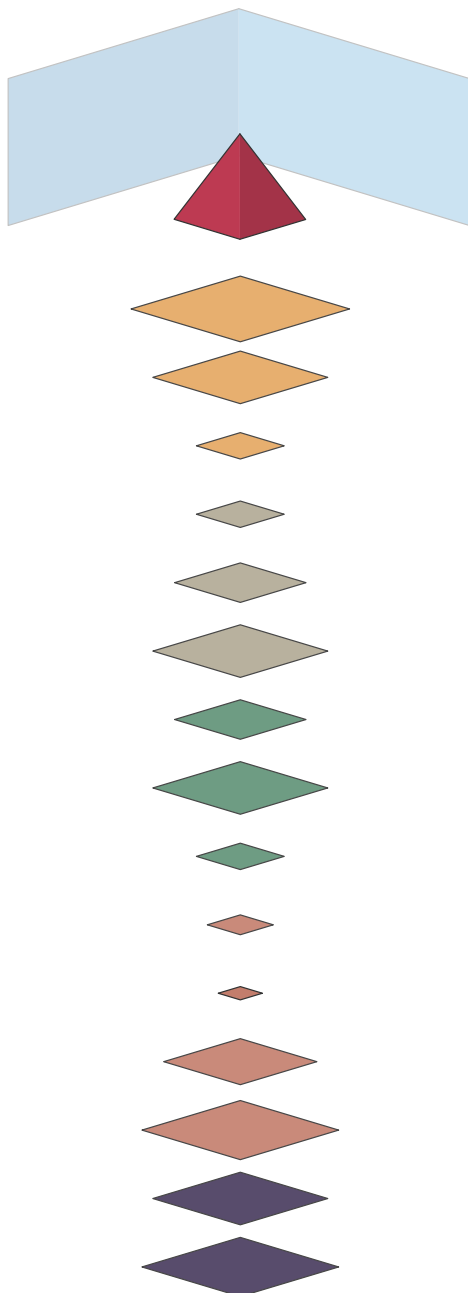


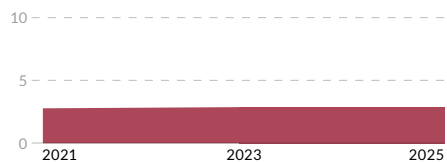


BRUNEI



2.90 $\nearrow 0.05$ CRIMINALITY SCORE

176th of 193 countries $\nearrow 4$
46th of 46 Asian countries $\searrow 1$
11th of 11 South-Eastern Asian countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS 3.20 $\searrow 0.10$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.00	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	4.00	0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	2.00	0.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	2.00	$\searrow 0.50$
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	3.00	0.00
ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	4.00	0.00
FLORA CRIMES	3.00	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	4.00	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	2.00	0.00
HEROIN TRADE	1.50	$\searrow 1.00$
COCAINE TRADE	1.00	$\searrow 0.50$
CANNABIS TRADE	3.50	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	4.50	0.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	4.00	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	4.50	$\nearrow 0.50$



CRIMINAL ACTORS 2.60 $\nearrow 0.20$

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	2.00	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	3.00	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	4.00	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	3.00	$\nearrow 1.00$



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

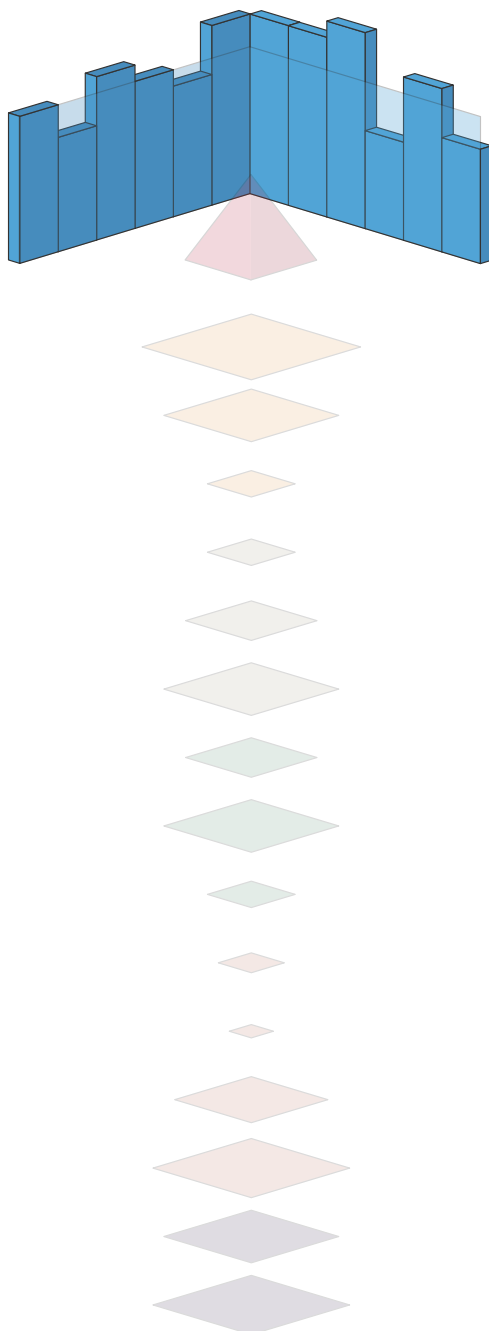


Funded by
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ENACT is funded by the European Union
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Transnational Organized Crime.



BRUNEI



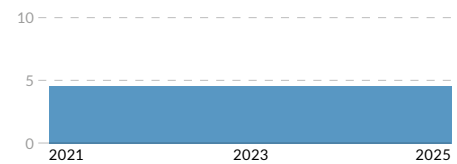
4.63 $\nearrow 0.04$

RESILIENCE SCORE

107th of 193 countries -

21st of 46 Asian countries $\searrow 1$

5th of 11 South-Eastern Asian countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP
AND GOVERNANCE **4.50** $\nearrow 0.50$

GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY
AND ACCOUNTABILITY **3.50** $\searrow 0.50$

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION **5.00** $\nearrow 0.50$

NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS **4.50** 0.00

JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION **4.00** 0.00

LAW ENFORCEMENT **5.50** 0.00

TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY **5.50** 0.00

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING **5.50** 0.00

ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY **6.00** 0.00

VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT **3.00** 0.00

PREVENTION **5.00** 0.00

NON-STATE ACTORS **3.50** 0.00



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking is a significant concern in Brunei, which serves as both a transit and destination country. The primary targets are migrant workers – particularly from Bangladesh, China, Indonesia and the Philippines – who are vulnerable to coercion and exploitation in sectors such as construction, domestic work, fishing and manufacturing. Many arrive through recruitment schemes or visa arrangements that result in debt-based coercion, wage withholding, contract substitution and document confiscation. Some female migrants on tourist visas are forced into sex trafficking, while LGBTQ+ individuals face heightened risks of extortion and psychological coercion due to discriminatory policies. There have also been reports of Bruneian citizens getting involved in scam centres across South East Asia, raising concerns that some of them may be unrecognized victims of trafficking for forced criminality.

Human smuggling, though less documented, is also an issue. Brunei's porous land and maritime borders, particularly with Malaysia, facilitate smuggling activity. Although prosecutions are rare, reports of Bruneian brokers providing fake work visas and employers circumventing foreign labour quotas through illicit means point to the existence of smuggling networks. Corruption, including the bribery of low-level labour and immigration officials, enables these practices.

Extortion and protection racketeering are less visible in Brunei but do occur. Vulnerable migrants and LGBTQ+ individuals may be subjected to coercion, abuse and exploitation.

TRADE

Arms trafficking in Brunei is minimal, with few reported cases involving illicit firearms. Most seizures have involved homemade weapons, typically used by poachers. Although there have been no recent seizures, Brunei's strategic location in South East Asia continues to raise concerns.

The trade in counterfeit goods is not considered a significant criminal market. However, the lack of publicly available seizure data makes it difficult to assess the scale and value of the market. While counterfeiting of items such as electronics and sporting goods remains limited, there has been a noticeable increase in counterfeit medicines and branded beauty products – posing heightened risks to public health and consumer safety. Strong law enforcement efforts and growing public awareness of intellectual property rights have helped limit the spread of this market and mitigate its associated risks.

The illicit trade in excise goods, particularly alcohol and cigarettes, is a more notable concern. Strict domestic regulations and high excise taxes make Brunei an attractive destination for such contraband, especially from neighbouring Malaysia and through maritime routes. Although seizures are reported, the government does not publish comprehensive data, making it difficult to gauge the full extent of the market.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora crimes in Brunei are limited in scope and scale but primarily involve illegal logging and cross-border activity along the Malaysian border. While national forest loss has generally declined, specific regions like Pengkalan Batu remain affected. Criminal networks and foreign actors are suspected of involvement, particularly in the harvesting and smuggling of agarwood. Armed Malaysian loggers encroaching into Brunei's forests suggest the need for stronger border enforcement.

Fauna crimes are typically facilitated through social media platforms and informal marketplaces. Birds and mammals are the most commonly traded species, with enforcement often reactive and reliant on public reporting. Although comprehensive data is lacking, occasional sales of species such as monkeys and wildcats have been documented. Brunei is also home to critically endangered species like the pangolin and proboscis monkey, which remain at risk due to poaching and habitat loss.

Non-renewable resource crimes are not a major concern. The sector has not seen significant involvement from transnational organized crime, though sporadic cases of local fraud and smuggling have occurred, including a fraudulent gold investment scheme. Brunei's limited capacity to trace illicit financial flows, weak record-keeping and proximity to high-risk neighbours point to potential vulnerabilities.

DRUGS

Brunei has no significant heroin or cocaine markets, with few or no seizures reported in recent years. However, its location in South East Asia – a major production and transit region – leaves the country vulnerable to heroin trafficking. The cannabis market is small but growing, with young men being the primary users. Despite harsh penalties, some cases have involved local nationals participating in transnational networks. Cannabis is the preferred drug among younger users, and enforcement efforts primarily focus on trafficking rather than demand reduction. Brunei's synthetic drug market is more established, with methamphetamine – particularly in its crystalline form, known locally as 'syabu' – the most commonly used substance. Transnational trafficking networks are active and there have been

instances of involvement by state-embedded actors. Law enforcement operations have targeted international and domestic syndicates, leading to major arrests and record drug seizures. Other synthetic drugs such as ketamine and ecstasy are also present in smaller quantities, with usage patterns shifting over time. There is a link between synthetic drug trafficking and money laundering.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crimes have increased in Brunei in recent years, with malware and distributed denial-of-service attacks being the most common. Cases of cryptocurrency-related fraud have also been reported. Despite these threats, Brunei is considered to have relatively strong cyber capabilities and public awareness, particularly in comparison to other South East Asian countries. While this provides some protection, cyber threats continue to evolve.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial fraud is a moderate concern in Brunei, typically involving scams carried out through social media and messaging apps. Youth are disproportionately targeted by romance scams, fake job offers and false product advertisements. Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable due to their reliance on money transfers and remittance services.

Financial crimes involve private-sector actors, state-embedded individuals and criminal networks. Embezzlement and the misuse of public funds are among the most prevalent crimes. Additionally, Brunei's currency interchangeability with the Singapore dollar and gaps in cybersecurity increase its attractiveness for financial crime. However, the country is not a regional financial centre, and its robust financial regulations help mitigate the overall risk of financial crime.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

There is no evidence of mafia-style groups operating in Brunei. Criminal networks in the country remain relatively

limited compared to other South East Asian nations. Where such networks do exist, their activities are most apparent in areas such as human trafficking and smuggling, financial crime, cybercrime and the synthetic drug market. These groups appear to operate in a decentralized and loosely organized manner, with little information available about their internal structure.

Similarly, assessing the extent of state-embedded actors in Brunei is difficult, largely due to the state's control over the media and limited civil society oversight. Still, concerns persist regarding corruption and official complicity in human trafficking cases. Recent high-profile cases have exposed vulnerabilities within law enforcement institutions. More broadly, Brunei's status as an absolute monarchy raises structural concerns, particularly regarding the overlap between state resources and personal wealth, which complicates transparency and accountability efforts.

Brunei's geographic location places it along major transnational trafficking routes, exposing it to the same illicit flows that affect other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. Previous reports have cited the presence of Chinese Triads and West African criminal networks, highlighting Brunei's vulnerability to transnational influence. Foreign nationals are also reportedly involved in human trafficking and smuggling within sending countries and in cross-border operations. Additionally, migrant labour practices involving foreign companies with Bruneian government contracts raise concerns about exploitative recruitment and forced labour.

The private sector, particularly in construction and employment agencies, has been linked to the facilitation of human trafficking and smuggling. Employers and recruiters have reportedly used unlicensed agents and falsified documentation, contributing to labour exploitation. These practices disproportionately affect migrant workers, who may face coercion, wage withholding and poor living conditions. Financial sector actors have also been implicated in fraudulent activities, including unauthorized loans, remittance schemes and cross-border cash smuggling.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Brunei's political leadership and governance are characterized by centralized authority under an absolute monarchy, with the Sultan exercising control over all branches of government. This structure ensures political stability and a consistent stance against crime, including transnational organized

crime, and is supported by stringent laws and regional cooperation. The country benefits from a high degree of political continuity; however, this governance model limits public participation and civic engagement. Freedoms of the press, assembly and political expression are restricted, narrowing the space for public discourse. While there is no

evidence of criminal capture of state institutions, the lack of transparency in governance processes makes it difficult to fully assess potential influence.

Government transparency and accountability remain limited, despite the presence of anti-corruption legislation and the work of the Anti-Corruption Bureau. The introduction of digital platforms for public services, such as e-payments, reflects ongoing efforts towards modernization. However, independent oversight mechanisms are weak, and civil society involvement in monitoring government activities is minimal. The Brunei Investment Agency operates with limited transparency, and the legislative process is not open to public scrutiny. Budget reporting and impact assessments are sparse, further weakening accountability structures.

Brunei is party to several international conventions addressing organized crime and corruption, including the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the UN Convention against Corruption. It actively engages with regional and international partners such as INTERPOL, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and ASEAN. Practical collaboration is evident in areas such as drug control and environmental protection, supported by bilateral extradition agreements with neighbouring countries. However, Brunei has not ratified all relevant international instruments, including the UN Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, and there is limited public reporting on the outcomes of its international engagements. Brunei has also sought assistance from other countries to trace the criminal proceeds sent abroad and to request mutual legal assistance for asset restraint and confiscation.

Domestically, Brunei's governance framework includes a robust legal system supported by legislation aimed at addressing organized crime. Major laws include the Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons Act, the Misuse of Drugs Act and legislation prohibiting the possession of illegal arms. These laws impose strict penalties and cover a wide range of offences. However, challenges remain in their enforcement. Provisions to address wildlife and environmental crimes are not always effectively applied, for example, and prosecution rates for certain offences remain low. Although Brunei's legal frameworks largely align with international standards in form, implementation gaps continue to limit their overall effectiveness. The government is also working to strengthen its response to cybercrime. Notably, the adoption of a Cybersecurity Order in 2023 signals growing political will to address digital threats. Despite these steps, progress remains slow, and more proactive measures are needed to effectively address the country's cybersecurity challenges.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Brunei's judiciary consists of both secular and Islamic courts, each operating under distinct legal systems. Secular courts incorporate elements of due process, while Sharia courts follow different procedural norms. The judiciary is considered as being under significant executive influence, and there are no documented cases of judicial decisions that challenge the ruling authority. Judicial capacity to handle organized crime cases is limited, with no known specialized units focusing solely on such offences. While the prison system shows no signs of infiltration by organized crime, independent monitoring mechanisms are absent.

Law enforcement agencies – particularly the Royal Brunei Police Force and the Anti-Corruption Bureau – are generally well-resourced and supported by the government. These agencies play an active role in combating organized crime and corruption. The police also receive training and funding from INTERPOL, which enhances their capabilities in areas such as intelligence gathering, fugitive tracking, cybercrime, drug offences and environmental crime. Brunei also has separate law enforcement units focused on organized crime, including the Specialist Trafficking Unit and the Narcotics Control Bureau, both of which operate under centralized coordination. However, the effectiveness of these specialized units is contested due to investigatory limitations, a lack of understanding of certain crimes and overall weak institutional performance. There is an over-reliance on victim testimony, and specialized investigative techniques are rarely used to substantiate evidence, resulting in most cases being prosecuted under non-trafficking statutes.

Brunei's geographical position – near Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia, and along key routes connecting China and Oceania – places it within a broader regional context of transnational criminal activity affecting many ASEAN countries. While not a major destination for smuggled individuals, Brunei is exposed to various illicit activities, including flora and fauna crimes, human trafficking and illicit financial flows. Ongoing land and maritime border disputes with Malaysia further heighten these vulnerabilities. The government has taken steps to bolster border security through increased patrols and the use of digital monitoring systems, but limited public reporting makes it difficult to assess the effectiveness of these measures. Brunei is also working to strengthen its resilience against cyber-infiltration through initiatives like the National Cyber Security Framework. This framework establishes voluntary standards that companies and organizations can adopt to reduce the risk of cybercrimes committed by criminal groups. Still, the overall effectiveness of these efforts remains uncertain.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Brunei's anti-money laundering framework demonstrates a clear institutional commitment. The country has established a Financial Intelligence Unit, enacted relevant laws and is a member of the Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering. It has also taken steps to align domestic legislation with international standards. However, enforcement is inconsistent. No senior officials have been prosecuted for financial crimes, and oversight of certain sectors, such as online gambling, remains insufficient. While mechanisms for beneficial ownership transparency exist, they are unevenly applied, and some designated non-financial businesses lack adequate supervision.

The regulatory environment generally supports legitimate business activity. The absence of restrictions on foreign ownership and the use of uniform tax structures help boost investor confidence. Regulatory agencies have taken steps to curb fraud, such as publishing lists of unlicensed companies. High internet connectivity supports the growth of digital commerce, but oversight of digital platforms and e-commerce remains under-developed. Although there is no evidence that economic zones are influenced by organized crime, strict regulations on goods like alcohol and tobacco – while consistent with domestic norms – have contributed to the growth of illicit markets.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Brunei has established shelters and referral systems for trafficking victims, but their reach is limited. These services are less accessible to adult sex workers, LGBTQ+ individuals and workers who have left their employers. The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Fund has not been used to provide compensation, and support from domestic NGOs remains minimal. Migrant workers face vulnerabilities due to inadequate screening and the risk of criminalization. Victims are often criminalized rather than supported, with the government prioritizing immigration enforcement over victim protection – resulting in violations of the non-punishment principle. Embassy staff from source countries often play a more active role in supporting victims than local authorities. The absence of independent oversight further hinders the assessment and improvement of these protection services. Brunei operates a drug treatment and rehabilitation centre under the Prisons Department, offering services such as medical detoxification, physical exercise and recreational activities managed by the Narcotics Control Bureau. However, the government adopts a securitized approach to drug use and trafficking, prioritizing punitive measures – including imprisonment, fines, corporal punishment and the potential application of the death penalty, which remains under a moratorium.

The government has a punitive approach to crime prevention. Penalties for offences related to organized crime include imprisonment and capital punishment. While these measures may act as deterrents, their long-term effectiveness is

unclear. Public awareness campaigns exist, particularly on cybercrime and trafficking, and some are conducted through digital platforms and community events. However, there is no comprehensive prevention strategy or institutional framework for community-based engagement. Protective measures such as whistle-blower programmes or community policing initiatives are not evident in public records.

Civil society activity in Brunei is highly restricted. Organizations must register with the state, and many practise self-censorship due to fear of reprisal. The media operate under significant state control, limiting investigative journalism and public accountability. A small number of civil society organizations address social and labour issues, but their mandates often align with government priorities and their operational independence is limited. There is minimal evidence of civil society initiatives that focus on organized crime or corruption. Government monitoring of online discourse and restrictions on freedom of assembly further constrain civic engagement. These structural barriers limit the ability of non-state actors to contribute meaningfully to resilience against organized crime.

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.