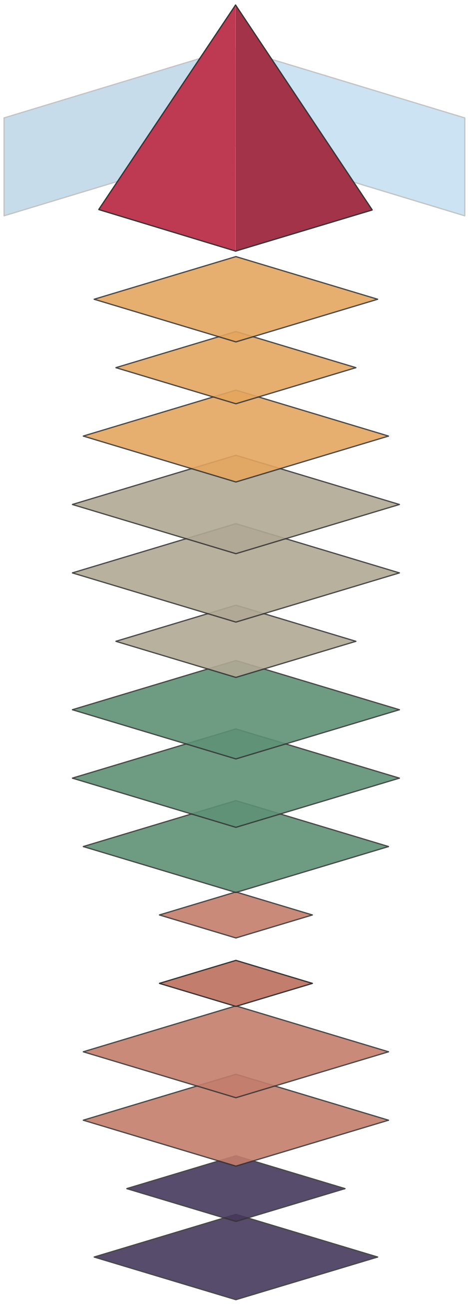
GLOBAL ORGANIZED CRIME INDEX

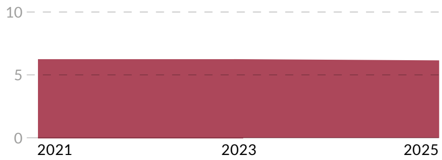
GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

CAMEROON



6.18 ↘0.08 CRIMINALITY SCORE

47th of 193 countries ↘10
13th of 54 African countries ↘3
3rd of 11 Central African countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS	6.27	↗0.03
HUMAN TRAFFICKING	6.50	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	5.50	0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	7.00	↗1.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	7.50	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	7.50	0.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	5.50	↗0.50
FLORA CRIMES	7.50	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	7.50	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	7.00	↘0.50
HEROIN TRADE	3.50	↘1.00
COCAINE TRADE	3.50	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	7.00	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	7.00	0.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	5.00	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	6.50	↗0.50

CRIMINAL ACTORS	6.10	↘0.20
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	3.50	↘1.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	7.50	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	8.50	↗0.50
FOREIGN ACTORS	7.50	↗0.50
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	3.50	↘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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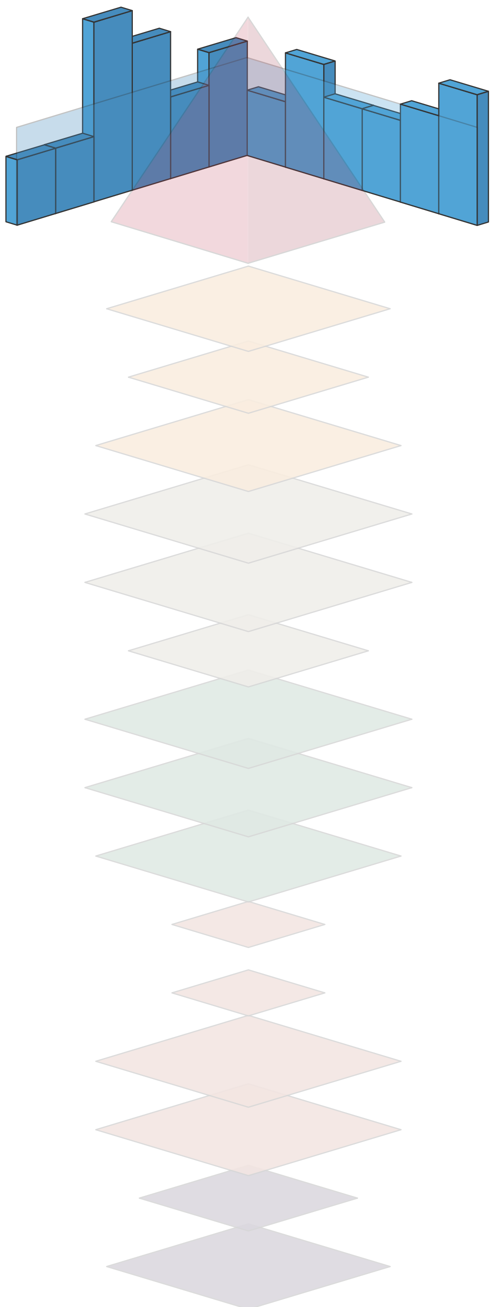
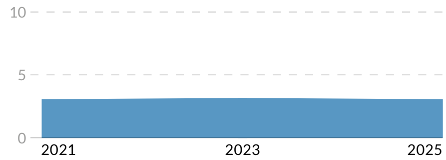
CAMEROON



3.13 ↘0.04

RESILIENCE SCORE

162nd of 193 countries ↗3
36th of 54 African countries ↗2
5th of 11 Central African countries ↗1



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	**2.00**	0.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	**2.00**	↗0.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	**5.50**	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	**4.50**	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	**2.50**	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	**3.50**	↘0.50
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	**2.00**	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	**3.50**	0.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	**2.50**	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	**2.50**	0.00
PREVENTION	**3.00**	↗0.50
NON-STATE ACTORS	**4.00**	↘1.00

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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Cameroon is a source, transit and destination for human trafficking, exacerbated by economic instability and conflicts in the Far North, Southwest and Northwest regions. Traffickers exploit vulnerable groups, including displaced persons, refugees and marginalized communities, particularly in artisanal mining, agriculture and fishing. Child labour, often driven by poverty, is widespread, and child disappearances and baby trafficking are linked to organized criminal networks. Children from Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin and Togo are trafficked to Cameroon for labour on farms in the North, West and Northwest regions. Deceptive recruitment schemes lure victims abroad, especially to western Asia, Europe and neighbouring African countries, including Benin and Niger. The Gulf of Guinea is used as a route for transporting children for labour trafficking in cocoa farming in Côte d'Ivoire.

Cameroon is primarily a source country for human smuggling, with growing activity across urban centres. Smuggling operations are largely driven by young people seeking opportunities overseas, often relying on brokers to obtain fraudulent travel documents. A rising trend involves the smuggling of youth identified as talented footballers, especially in urban areas, while women are frequently smuggled to Western Asia, Europe, the US and other African nations. These types of smuggling carry significant risks of forced labour or sexual exploitation once victims arrive at their destination. Although smuggling-related violence is limited, instability may increase demand for facilitators among displaced populations. International transit on west and central Mediterranean routes, particularly via Libya, has exposed migrants to escalating risks of exploitation and abuse.

Armed groups – notably the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP), and particularly in Anglophone regions and the North region – increasingly rely on extortion, kidnappings and taxation of local populations, including fishers, farmers and herders. These groups impose restrictions on trade and confiscate significant portions of income. Street crime is pervasive in urban centres, where intimidation and machete threats are common. Urban youth gangs and thugs intimidate residents in major cities and extort money and favours. Secessionists extort money from civilians at roadblocks nationwide, and English speakers are the most vulnerable to this form of extortion. There have been localized changes in criminal dynamics, but overall illicit activity continues to rise in value and societal impact.

TRADE

Cameroon is a source, transit and destination country for arms trafficking, a rapidly expanding criminal market, especially in areas affected by violence. Illicit flows of arms are facilitated by porous borders, notably with Nigeria but also involving weapons from Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR), including arms diverted from regional military stockpiles. Circulating inventories include legacy and homemade weapons. Trafficking intensified from 2012 due to the involvement of armed groups in the Ambazonia War, and demand peaked in 2017 as the conflict escalated. Enforcement is limited and the illicit market is growing in reach and economic value, driven by regional instability.

The market for counterfeit goods is present nationwide and concentrated in Douala, Yaoundé and Bafoussam. The proliferation of counterfeit pharmaceuticals and branded products has weakened local industries and reduced public revenue. Interventions have mitigated losses in some sectors but border porosity, corruption and limited enforcement are driving factors. Home-based production contributes to the spread of the market, while international influences and internal constraints hinder effective monitoring and response. Illicit trade in excisable goods such as alcohol, cigarettes, cement and food products is widespread, contributing to substantial tax losses. While increased port controls have led to some reductions, overall illicit trade has expanded. Smuggling networks exploit weak enforcement and high domestic tax burdens to distribute goods, often sourced from neighbouring countries. Though direct data is scarce, indicators such as low customs effectiveness, weak traceability systems and limited tobacco control suggest elevated risks.

ENVIRONMENT

Illegal timber trafficking in Cameroon is pervasive, with rising involvement from domestic and transnational networks. Activities such as unauthorized logging, laundering of wood and misuse of logging permits are common, often facilitated by local authorities and foreign traders. Timber, including critically endangered species, is harvested for export to Asia and Europe. The domestic market is supplied mainly through informal channels. Despite measures to combat these practices, widespread corruption undermines enforcement. The illicit trade is increasingly lucrative and organized, exploiting loopholes in forest governance.

Wildlife trafficking is pervasive, encompassing ape skulls, pangolin scales, bushmeat, live primates, reptiles and elephant ivory. The trade endangers species already in decline and has contributed to regional extinctions. Interventions have reduced local availability of some products but enforcement is hampered by systemic corruption and weak judicial follow-through. Recent cases reveal a rising volume of illicit trade, and wildlife goods are increasingly routed through Cameroon from neighbouring countries towards Asian markets. The illicit trade is vast in scope and value, often intertwined with arms smuggling, human trafficking, counterfeit goods, livestock theft and illegal mining.

Non-renewable resource crimes encompass illicit fuel trade and unauthorized gold and diamond smuggling. Cameroon is a destination and a transit hub, particularly for fuel from Nigeria and gold and gemstones, including diamonds, from CAR. Recent efforts to combat illicit operations, including cracking down on illegal fuel shipments and reducing gold export duties to encourage legal trade, contributed to a decrease in unregulated gold and fuel trafficking, although their impact is limited. While mining activities are regulated on paper, weak enforcement enables unlicensed operations. Despite being widespread and generating value, most of the trade is conducted by small operators, and only fuel-related crime potentially has a broader societal impact.

DRUGS

Cameroon is a key importer and trans-shipment hub for domestically and regionally produced cannabis, and trafficking routes operate through seaports and airports. Production is concentrated in the Southwest and Northwest and most exports are destined for Nigeria. Cannabis is illegal but widely consumed, especially among youth, due to its affordability. A sharp reported rise in drug use in the Far North region is linked to Boko Haram insurgents. Tramadol is the primary synthetic drug of concern, and trafficking routes extend from India through West Africa. Distribution spans domestic and regional markets and use is prevalent among young people, motorcyclists and taxi drivers. Non-state armed groups reportedly oversee much of the trade. Despite roadside enforcement efforts, illegal sales persist. Trafficking and consumption levels of tramadol and methamphetamine are high. Cameroon is a transit and destination point for heroin, but the market has limited influence on society. Similarly, the cocaine market has a relatively small impact. Consumption is reportedly increasing but comprehensive data is not available.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crimes are increasing in Cameroon, particularly instances of ransomware, malware and hacking. Even though such crimes are a growing threat, little information is available. Most cyber-dependent crimes targeting individuals go undetected because reporting mechanisms are unclear and unknown.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

The financial crimes market adversely affects many areas of society, and its influence is expanding and gaining significant value. The most prevalent types of crimes include embezzlement of public funds, tax evasion, fraud and other forms of cyber-enabled financial crimes, resulting in significant financial losses. Fraud cases, in particular, have reportedly increased in recent years. Common schemes involve internet scams, the use of fake identities to receive funds from abroad, and transfers conducted through mobile money platforms and money transfer companies.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Mafia-like groups in Cameroon include Ambazonian armed separatist factions and urban youth gangs that increasingly engage in organized crime. Some separatist groups in the Northwest and Southwest have evolved into criminal enterprises focused on smuggling and extortion, shifting away from purely political to financial aims. Criminal networks proliferate, among them kidnap groups operating in the Adamawa region, armed robbers and traffickers in the East region, and criminal networks exploiting the conflict in the Southwest and Northwest regions. Importantly, the influence of looser criminal networks is spreading across the country. Criminal networks are involved in activities including drug trafficking, arms trafficking, kidnapping, hijacking, money laundering, the illegal fuel trade and illegal logging. Kidnapping for ransom by these networks is prolific, particularly in the North, East and Southwest regions.

High levels of corruption in state institutions potentially provide a safe haven for criminal actors. Corruption by state officials mainly involves embezzlement of public funds and abuse of office. Such actions facilitate other criminal activities, and some state officials and political elites are believed to be profiting from fuel, timber and wildlife trafficking, and probably from trade in gold and diamonds. Law enforcement officers and military personnel are increasingly involved in running criminal structures.

Foreign actors negatively affect many areas of society and state structures, though their influence has decreased. Actors from neighbouring countries include criminal networks from Nigeria, CAR, Gabon and Congo. Kidnapping for ransom is increasingly prolific, and Chadian and CAR groups operate in border zones. Nigerian criminal actors, notably the ISWAP, are involved in illicit economies in the Southwest and Northwest regions. The provision of services to the local population is a major part of ISWAP's activities. The organization offers protection to fishermen, herders and farmers from violence that is often perpetrated by ISWAP militants themselves. There is also evidence suggesting the involvement of criminal actors from other parts of the world, such as Chinese business owners and Turkish officials, especially in enabling human trafficking by facilitating the granting of visas with little oversight. Chinese companies and traders have also been involved in illegal logging and mining. The involvement of Chinese nationals in organized crime seems to be declining, however, aided by the return of relative peace in CAR and the reduced influence of militant groups in English-speaking regions.

Sources report considerable potential for money laundering and financing of terrorism in Cameroon, and billions of dollars are estimated to have been laundered through the economy over the past years. In the private sector, banks, forestry and wildlife operators, mining companies, property agents, currency exchange offices, dealers in precious metals and stones and notaries are some of the actors exposed to money laundering schemes or terrorist financing.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Cameroon has deep-rooted governance and institutional challenges. Political power is highly centralized, and state patronage and the ruling party's long incumbency reinforce its control over electoral institutions, the media and public resources. Opposition actors face systematic repression and are unable to gain power through free and fair elections. Though a regulatory framework addressing organized crime exists, it is weak, inconsistently implemented and misaligned with international norms. Political rhetoric is effectively translated into policies and implemented only on the president's orders. High-level corruption and limited institutional independence have hindered anti-crime measures. Against this backdrop, human rights violations are rampant and there are reports of arbitrary killings, torture, disappearances, restrictions on freedom of expression, corruption, and abuses by state and non-state actors. The ongoing Anglophone conflict and Boko Haram insurgency have further exacerbated governance and security issues.

High-profile legal proceedings abroad have drawn renewed attention to allegations of bribery involving multinational corporations and oil contracts in West Africa, including Cameroon. Domestically, the public is acutely aware of state corruption, which is driven by limited transparency, political repression and the apparent ineffectiveness of oversight bodies. National authorities report substantial financial losses due to corruption, undermining public service delivery and economic development. Legislative initiatives include plans to digitize public procurement processes through an existing online platform, but implementation faces institutional and technical hurdles. Broader instability and longstanding security issues further complicate anti-corruption efforts and governance reforms.

Cameroon is party to several international conventions aimed at preventing and combating organized crime, including treaties on corruption, drug control, arms trade and wildlife protection. Implementation and compliance challenges persist, and reform efforts are ongoing. Cameroon engages in bilateral and regional cooperation targeting human trafficking, drug and arms smuggling, and wildlife crime, and collaborates with INTERPOL. The country lacks extradition agreements with foreign states. A bilateral memorandum of understanding with Nigeria addresses wildlife crime along the common border, emphasizing joint enforcement, intelligence exchange and coordinated action against illicit trade in high-value natural resources.

Cameroon has laws to combat money laundering, drug trafficking, corruption, migration and wildlife crime, but they are inadequate. For example, legislation on wildlife crime is outdated and does not reflect the current context of such illicit activities. To address this, the national assembly passed a law that is awaiting promulgation by the president. Other legislation, such as the national mining code, is also outdated. A distinct issue with Cameroonian law is the requirement of the presence of force, fraud or coercion to determine a clear case of child trafficking and the fact that the law does not clearly distinguish human trafficking from smuggling.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Cameroon's judicial system faces significant structural and operational challenges in addressing organized crime. They include insufficient resources, overcrowded and deteriorating prisons, and limited institutional independence from the executive branch. Case backlogs and limited prosecutorial follow-through contribute to impunity, particularly in cases involving government officials suspected of organized criminal activity. Although high-profile individuals have been arrested, especially in the wildlife trafficking domain, there have been few successful prosecutions. Broad public perceptions of corruption are high. Legislative measures to counter organized crime were introduced during the reporting period but their implementation was constrained by systemic weaknesses and persistent governance limitations.

There are efforts to combat organized crime through increased training for law enforcement, regional intelligence cooperation, and participation in international initiatives such as the AIRCOP project, which aims to strengthen international airports' capacities to intercept high-risk passengers, cargo and mail. Joint interdiction task forces at major airports have contributed to a rise in seizures of drugs and other illicit goods. A multi-agency taskforce involving military, police and civil society actors has targeted the illegal fuel trade. However, the effectiveness of law enforcement is undermined by persistent corruption, especially in customs and forestry services. Anti-corruption campaigns are frequently viewed as politically selective, and customs officers are reportedly motivated by financial incentives linked to successful interdictions, weakening the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts.

Cameroon faces intersecting security, humanitarian and infrastructural challenges. Conflicts in the Far North, Northwest and Southwest regions have fuelled mass displacement and instability, while climate change has intensified food insecurity. Border areas with Nigeria, Chad and CAR are highly porous, enabling transnational trafficking of arms, drugs and natural resources, despite some reported improvement on the CAR frontier. Corruption and limited staffing at border posts compounds vulnerabilities. Organized crime exploits weak oversight at the Port of Douala, a major regional trade hub. While the government has enacted legislative reforms targeting criminal networks, persistent institutional shortcomings have hindered enforcement. Infrastructure investment, partly supported by EU funding, aims to address structural deficits.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Cameroon's regulatory framework to address money laundering is coordinated by its Financial Intelligence Unit, which has limited enforcement authority. The country participates in a regional anti-money laundering body but is under increased international monitoring due to strategic deficiencies in combating money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation financing. Although not classified as non-compliant by the EU, Cameroon is on the Financial Action Task Force grey list. Legislative measures exist but are inconsistently implemented, hindered by the absence of a dedicated compliance institution. To enhance enforcement, the government has conducted training for key public sector actors and banks have implemented transaction monitoring.

The economy is tightly regulated, with state-imposed price controls and limited economic freedom. Although government initiatives such as a national development strategy aim to shield legitimate businesses from criminal interference and foster economic growth, systemic challenges persist. The economic environment has been strained by inflation linked to global disruptions. Despite increased oil revenues and foreign assistance, structural issues such as high debt, entrenched corruption and excessive state control hinder development. Reforms addressing organized crime have been introduced into broader national strategies, but weak governance, poor interministerial coordination and unresolved internal conflict undermine their implementation and impact.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Cameroon's response to human trafficking shows limited effectiveness, and assistance to victims is inconsistent. Attempts to identify and support trafficking victims have had mixed results. Although there are some protection services, including shelter, healthcare and psycho-social care, systemic gaps persist. The government lacks a formal framework to encourage victim cooperation in legal proceedings and does not offer legal aid, counselling or protective measures for victims taking part in investigations or trials, despite reports of intimidation by trafficking networks. No official mechanisms exist to support drug users or protect whistle-blowers. Broader efforts to combat organized crime continue under general legislative measures but face implementation challenges.

Anti-organized crime approaches centre on punitive measures, with limited emphasis on prevention. The government has recently initiated targeted awareness efforts, however, notably a campaign with the International Organization for Migration to combat human trafficking and smuggling at international airports. Recent legislative measures have also increased trafficking-related investigations and convictions, improved cross-border cooperation and introduced protocols for child protection. However, challenges remain, including few prosecutions, inadequate funding, and legal gaps concerning child trafficking definitions. Allegations of official complicity persist without law enforcement response. While Cameroon is part of regional strategies to prevent various forms of organized crime through the Multinational Joint Task Force, implementation is relatively limited.

Civil society is active in addressing organized crime, particularly in areas such as human trafficking, human smuggling and wildlife crime, where partnerships with the state – especially in timber trafficking and fauna protection – have been effective. However, legislative frameworks regulating civil society participation are outdated and fall short of international norms. The government has increasingly repressed organizations critical of its policies, and state-media relations are hostile. Although Cameroon has one of Africa's richest media landscapes, it is dangerous for journalists. They face routine threats and arbitrary detention, contributing to widespread self-censorship. Some, especially those who are critical or outspoken, are often at risk of verbal or physical attacks, kidnappings and assassination. Restrictions on media freedom and civil liberties, as well as increased criticism and demonstrations, have intensified in the lead-up to the October 2025 presidential elections.

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.