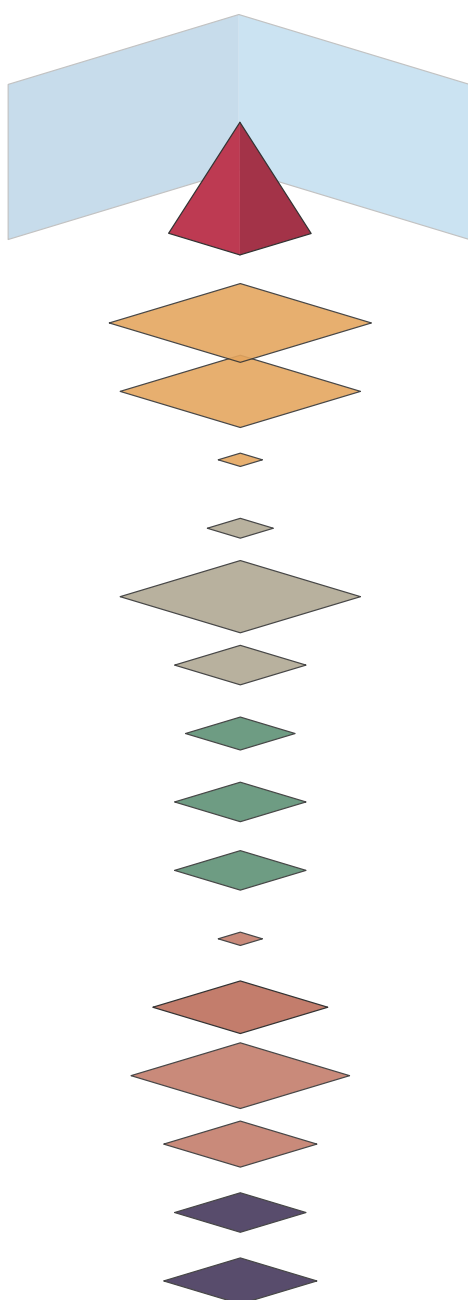
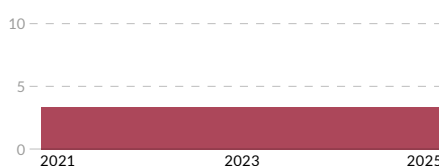


 CUBA



 3.35 $\nearrow 0.02$
CRIMINALITY SCORE

168th of 193 countries $\nearrow 2$
28th of 35 American countries $\nearrow 1$
6th of 13 Caribbean countries $\nearrow 2$



CRIMINAL MARKETS **3.40** $\nearrow 0.23$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	6.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
HUMAN SMUGGLING	5.50	0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	1.00	$\nearrow 1.00$
ARMS TRAFFICKING	1.50	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	5.50	0.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	3.00	0.00
FLORA CRIMES	2.50	$\nearrow 1.00$
FAUNA CRIMES	3.00	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	3.00	$\nearrow 1.00$
HEROIN TRADE	1.00	$\nearrow 1.50$
COCAINE TRADE	4.00	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	5.00	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	3.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	3.00	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	3.50	0.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS **3.30** $\nearrow 0.20$

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	3.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	3.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	3.50	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	2.00	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	4.50	0.00



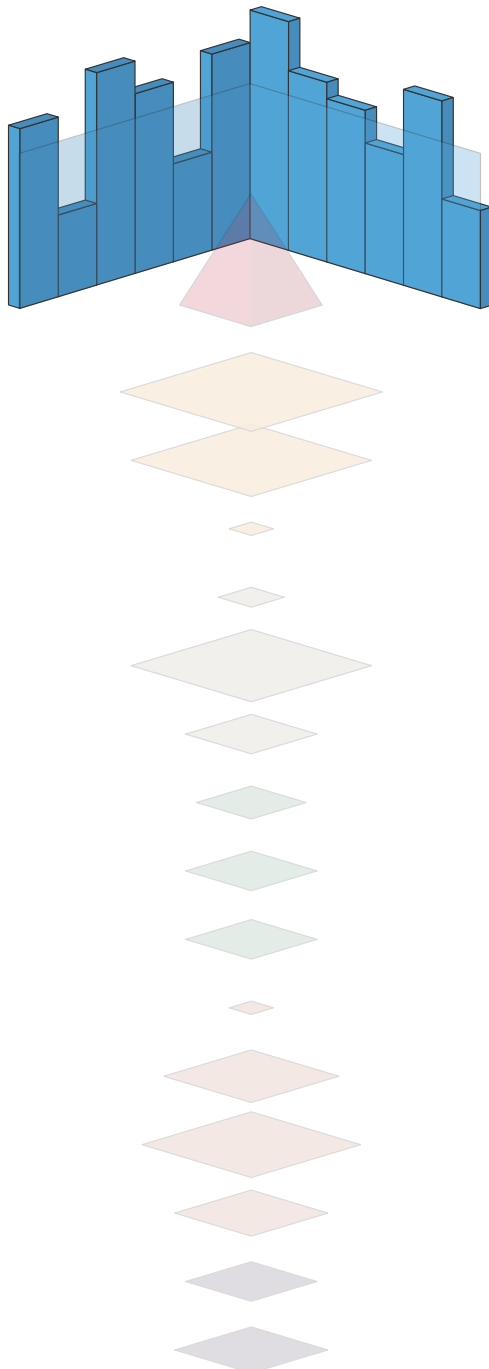
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Funded by
the European Union

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 CUBA

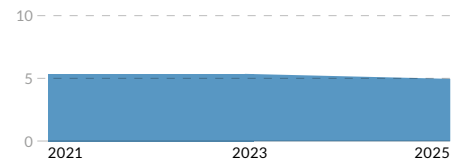


 4.96 $\nearrow 0.42$
RESILIENCE SCORE

89th of 193 countries $\nearrow 22$

18th of 35 American countries $\nearrow 6$

10th of 13 Caribbean countries $\nearrow 5$



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	5.50	$\nearrow 1.00$
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	2.50	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.50	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	5.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	3.00	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	6.00	$\nearrow 1.00$
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	7.00	$\nearrow 1.00$
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.50	0.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	5.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	4.00	0.00
PREVENTION	6.00	$\nearrow 1.00$
NON-STATE ACTORS	3.00	0.00



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Cuba remains a prevalent point for human trafficking, including sex trafficking, labour exploitation and coercive labour export practices. Vulnerable groups – such as minors, migrants and marginalized populations – are trafficked both within the country and abroad. Cuban officials have been implicated in trafficking activities, and coercion within state-linked labour programmes continues. Smuggled individuals, particularly women, face sexual exploitation during transit, with some resorting to sex work for survival. Recent reports document cases of Cubans being trafficked to conflict zones and raise concerns about the forced recruitment of children for military purposes. Local and transnational criminal networks sustain exploitation amid persistent domestic demand and limited accountability.

Human smuggling is also a prevalent criminal market, often overlapping with human trafficking and shaped by evolving visa policies and regional migration dynamics. Smuggling routes have shifted in response to regulatory changes. Although recent restrictions and legal pathways have curbed some irregular migration, smuggling operations – frequently involving maritime transport and forged documents – persist. Migrants, particularly women, girls and LGBTQI+ individuals, face high risks of abuse. Economic hardship and limited legal migration options continue to drive demand, while corruption and systemic inefficiencies undermine enforcement efforts.

Extortion is not a widespread illicit market.

TRADE

Arms trafficking in Cuba remains limited but shows signs of modest growth, partly due to reduced customs staffing, which may have allowed some illegal imports to go undetected. Reports of illegal pneumatic weapons and ammunition have increased, although most firearms used domestically are linked to street gangs involved in robberies and contract killings.

Trade in counterfeit pharmaceuticals remains widespread, driven by persistent medicine shortages and regulatory gaps. Various medications have been identified as counterfeit, with clonazepam – a benzodiazepine used to prevent and treat anxiety disorders and seizures – especially common. Tariff exemptions on essential goods, introduced in response to shortages, have been exploited by traffickers. While Haiti is often cited as a source, experts question the extent of its involvement. Limited data and weak enforcement continue

to hinder control efforts, allowing this trade to persist and potentially expand.

The illicit trade in excise goods in Cuba primarily involves the smuggling of tobacco products, rum and beer. These activities are often coordinated by Cuban nationals residing abroad – particularly in the US, Uruguay and Argentina – who facilitate transport through transnational networks. Customs authorities in destination countries regularly seize illegally imported goods, especially tobacco and alcohol. Recent convictions have linked a Cuban-led organized crime group to smuggling operations across multiple countries, underscoring the market's international scope.

ENVIRONMENT

Cuba's illegal timber market remains small and largely domestic, with no evidence of international trafficking. Local private actors, including companies, have been fined for transporting wood without permits, contributing to thousands of recorded forest-related infractions. The continued demand for high-value species like the Guayacán drives localized illegal logging. In recent years, forest crimes have been infrequent, with recent efforts emphasizing conservation and wildfire prevention.

Fauna crimes are also limited in scale, with wildlife trafficking – driven by local demand, cultural practices and international market pressures – a notable concern. Commonly trafficked species include reptiles, birds, molluscs and sea species. Cuban molluscs and endemic reptiles are especially targeted for sale to tourists and collectors, particularly in the US and EU. These species are often sold as pets, used in religious rituals or consumed as bushmeat, with little community recognition of the trade's illegality. The illicit shark fin trade is also significant, with Cuba ranking among the top global sources. Growing ties between Asian and Latin American criminal groups could further expand this market.

Crimes involving non-renewable resources, such as gasoline theft and illegal gold mining, are rare but persistent. Gasoline theft, which is often carried out by supply chain employees and criminal networks with international ties, is driven by severe shortages and results in the gasoline being resold at inflated black-market prices, deepening public frustration. Corruption within local gas distribution further exacerbates scarcity and increases prices. Meanwhile, illegal gold mining, mainly in Ciego de Ávila, has led to multiple prosecutions and significant environmental degradation. Criminal groups with foreign links, including those in the US, profit from discounted Cuban gold.

DRUGS

Heroin plays a minimal role in Cuba's illicit drug landscape. The country is not a producer, consumer or major transit route for heroin – nor is it for cocaine. However, smuggling routes from Suriname, the US, Mexico and Ecuador persist, with cocaine often concealed in household appliances, electric motorcycle batteries and other merchandise. The main entry points for cocaine are José Martí International Airport and terminals in Santiago de Cuba and Holguín. Despite strict anti-trafficking measures, cocaine trafficking continues to pose a challenge for the Cuban government.

Cannabis remains the most trafficked and widely consumed drug in Cuba, with marijuana primarily smuggled by sea from the US and the Dominican Republic. Domestic cultivation, particularly in Cuba's eastern provinces, also occurs. Traffickers use various concealment methods, including disguising marijuana as condiments and using human couriers.

The illicit market for synthetic drugs, especially synthetic cannabinoids and 'químico', is also growing, with rising popularity among Cuban youth. These substances are often imported from the US or locally produced, and are trafficked in various concealed forms. Despite shortages, local demand for these inexpensive drugs continues to rise, driven by socio-economic factors. The increasing presence of synthetic drugs poses a serious challenge for Cuban authorities – contributing to a rise in drug use and drug-related violence, especially amid the island's economic crisis – while the involvement of US-based criminal organizations underscores the transnational nature of the market.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-attacks remain relatively rare, but recent years have seen an uptick in attacks on government websites, often with the aim of destabilizing authorities. Notable attacks have included ransomware threats targeting the Ministries of Foreign Trade and Culture, carried out by groups such as Stormous Extortion Group. While some attacks have disrupted operations, such as influencing gasoline prices, data on their overall impact remains limited.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes such as tax evasion, currency trading scams and counterfeit dollar sales are relatively common. Criminal networks frequently exploit social networks and impersonate bank agents to defraud individuals, often resulting in substantial financial losses and in some cases, violence. Recent scandals have also exposed instances of embezzlement involving state officials. However, a lack of transparency in investigations makes it difficult to determine the true scope and scale of this market.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Gang activity in Havana is characterized by instability, with new youth gangs frequently emerging and disbanding. These groups engage in a range of crimes, including robbery, homicide, prostitution, extortion and drug trafficking. While some gangs have organizational structures, identifiable leaders and initiation rites, their transient nature makes them difficult to track. Despite their growing presence, local authorities struggle to intervene effectively, and official data is scarce, hampering response efforts. More loosely organized criminal networks, mainly led by unnamed entrepreneurs, control various illicit markets across Cuba. These include financial crimes, human and wildlife trafficking, human smuggling and illegal gold extraction. These groups frequently use moderate violence, such as beatings, threats and torture, against their victims. Despite extensive research, information about their leaders and specific operations remains limited.

State enterprises and officials are sometimes corrupted by criminals, particularly in human trafficking and labour exploitation within government-run export programmes. These actors appear to wield significant power within the legal system, enabling them to intimidate and control vulnerable workers and their families. Their influence likely extends to mid-level state positions, which they leverage for exploitation purposes and to ensure minimal resistance. This corruption strengthens organized crime organizations by giving them access to illicit markets, allowing them to profit from these practices with little oversight or consequence.

Foreign criminal actors are relatively scarce in Cuba due to the country's economic crisis and strict state control. However, some transnational groups, especially from Mexico and the US, may be leveraging Cuba's strategic location to traffic goods such as drugs and motor vehicles on the island. Although there have been reports of foreign involvement in human trafficking, it remains marginal.

Certain private-sector industries are connected to criminal activity, primarily tax evasion and black-market trading, and are driven by the scarcity of goods. These activities often involve the theft of state-controlled goods, such as fuel and wood, which are then sold through underground networks.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Cuba faces significant governance challenges, with ongoing restrictions on political pluralism and civil liberties under its one-party system. Although the government has passed some legal reforms and engaged in international cooperation – particularly against drug trafficking and human trafficking – these efforts are undermined by corruption and political repression. In 2024, Cuba experienced a surge in violent crime, especially homicides and robberies, with many incidents going unreported due to government control over crime statistics. Economic hardship, food shortages and power blackouts have fuelled public discontent and contributed to increased criminal activity and a rise in emigration.

Corruption remains pervasive, exacerbated by a lack of judicial independence and transparency. The government's control over crime and corruption data, coupled with limited public access to information, creates an environment of impunity and undermines accountability. Although anti-corruption laws exist, their enforcement is inconsistent, particularly among the political and military elite. Institutional transparency is minimal, with limited oversight mechanisms in areas like budgets and public procurement. These factors contribute to widespread public disillusionment, making it difficult for the government to combat corruption and uphold civil rights, judicial independence and press freedom.

Cuba has ratified major international treaties on drug trafficking and corruption, and maintains extradition treaties and legal assistance agreements with countries including the US and Venezuela. It has also committed to various human rights instruments and collaborates extensively with international partners on issues like drug trafficking, supported by initiatives such as real-time communication offices at airports. Additionally, Cuba has strengthened its ties with the World Customs Organization. However, the effectiveness of the island's operational initiatives against organized crime and corruption remain unclear.

At the national level, Cuba has implemented several laws aimed at combating organized crime, including provisions on drug trafficking, money laundering, firearms control and environmental crimes. Recent initiatives have targeted illegal logging, wildlife trafficking and cybersecurity issues. Challenges, however, include human rights violations during law enforcement operations and perceived enforcement inefficiencies. While laws criminalizing organized crime and other illicit activities exist, the effectiveness of these measures remains unclear due to limited data and enforcement gaps. The government has also focused on strategic foreign policy objectives, and national action plans continue to address issues such as human trafficking, reflecting ongoing coordination between the state and civil society.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Cuba's legal system remains heavily influenced by political control, severely undermining judicial independence and human rights protection. Political cases often result in disproportionate punishments and trials are often secretive. Prisons suffer from overcrowding, poor conditions and reports of abuse, with limited international oversight. The judiciary's subordination to the Communist Party has led to inefficiency and corruption. In 2024, the system faced criticism for its failure to investigate alleged links between high-ranking officials and organized crime, in addition to an inconsistent approach to justice. These issues have further eroded public trust and prompted an exodus of legal professionals.

To combat transnational organized crime, Cuba relies on strict police and military control, often collaborating with the US and regional partners. The National Revolutionary Police and the military play critical roles in enforcement operations, while neighbourhood organizations like the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution act to prevent gang formation. However, the police and military face allegations of corruption and abuses, particularly for targeting marginalized groups, due to their enforcement strategy. While human rights violations, including harsh punishments and extensive surveillance, contribute to low crime rates, this strategy has also fuelled widespread public distrust, especially among vulnerable communities, due to its repressive nature.

Strict border controls have pushed many citizens to resort to illegal methods to escape the country, including the use of fraudulent documents or makeshift boats, which in turn fuels the human smuggling and trafficking markets. While the government has adopted measures such as removing visa requirements for certain countries and lowering passport costs, these efforts have not fully eradicated these issues. Customs offices have also been established to combat drug trafficking.

Meanwhile, the state's monopoly on internet access continues to restrict connectivity, despite efforts to strengthen cybersecurity. A significant cyberattack in 2024 exposed vulnerabilities in Cuba's cybersecurity by disrupting critical infrastructure.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Cuba's tightly controlled economy limits traditional money laundering through financial institutions, but a large black market operates alongside the state economy. Despite government efforts, issues including inadequate financial reporting, weak enforcement in non-financial sectors and

an opaque banking system hinder effective anti-money laundering (AML) measures. While Cuba faces strategic deficiencies, it is considered technically compliant with AML standards, having made advancements through new regulations. The country is also party to international conventions against organized crime and money laundering. While limited foreign investment and the absence of offshore casinos reduce risks for money laundering, challenges remain in improving enforcement and transparency.

Cuba maintains a centrally planned, state-run economy, with authorities overseeing major enterprises and limiting private-sector activity. Although the number of licences for private businesses has increased since 2010, businesses face stringent regulations and government interference, contributing to a substantial black market. While Cuba encourages foreign investment in sectors like tourism and energy, partnerships must involve state enterprises. The country's dual monetary system exacerbates illegal economic activity, and economic conditions have worsened due to US sanctions and the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2024, anti-corruption efforts led to extensive audits and business closures, but private entrepreneurs continue to struggle with regulatory restrictions and economic instability.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Cuba's support for victims remains limited, with inadequate programmes for victim identification, housing and assistance. Authorities have reportedly coerced professionals into foreign labour export programmes, and no formal mechanisms exist to identify sex trafficking victims during law enforcement raids. Although the government has claimed to establish victim referral systems, access to these services is contingent on the government's assessment of a victim's political status. Despite creating Centres for the Protection of Children and Adolescents, the effectiveness of Cuba's victim protection plans remains unclear. Additionally, the absence of a formal witness protection system hinders the prosecution of traffickers and other criminals.

Cuba has implemented a 2023–2026 National Action Plan to combat trafficking and has offered training to authorities on organized crime. However, the government continues to profit from forced labour, particularly through foreign medical missions, where workers face coercive practices such as wage retention and passport confiscation. Additionally, the government has plans to establish a National Drug Observatory to tackle drug abuse, especially among youth.

Civil society remains tightly controlled. NGOs are denied legal recognition and human rights groups are repressed, with advocates prosecuted and imprisoned. Press freedom in Cuba remains severely restricted, with the media under strict government control. Journalists who oppose the regime face arbitrary detention, harassment and equipment confiscation. While some government-approved organizations have limited autonomy, independent groups

documenting human rights violations are heavily targeted. Cuba's constitution guarantees freedom of expression, but only within socialist limits, and laws penalize criticism of political leaders. Despite minor improvements, Cuba remains a repressive state that limits independent media and activism and imposes harsh penalties for dissent.

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.