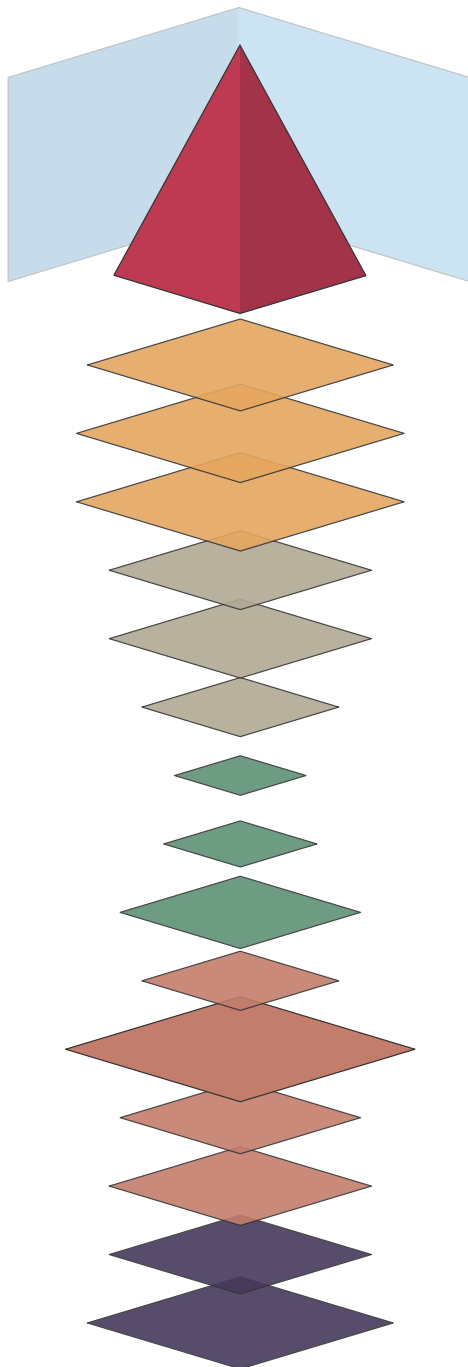




ITALY



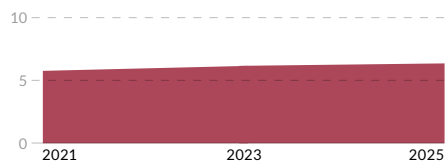
6.37 $\nearrow 0.15$

CRIMINALITY SCORE

39th of 193 countries $\nearrow 1$

3rd of 44 European countries -

1st of 8 Southern European countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS

5.83 $\nearrow 0.10$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	7.00	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	7.50	0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	7.50	0.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	6.00	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	6.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	4.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
FLORA CRIMES	3.00	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	3.50	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	5.50	0.00
HEROIN TRADE	4.50	$\searrow 0.50$
COCAINE TRADE	8.00	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	5.50	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	6.00	$\nearrow 1.00$
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	6.00	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	7.00	0.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS

6.90 $\nearrow 0.20$

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	9.00	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	4.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	7.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
FOREIGN ACTORS	7.50	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	7.00	0.00



This project was funded in part
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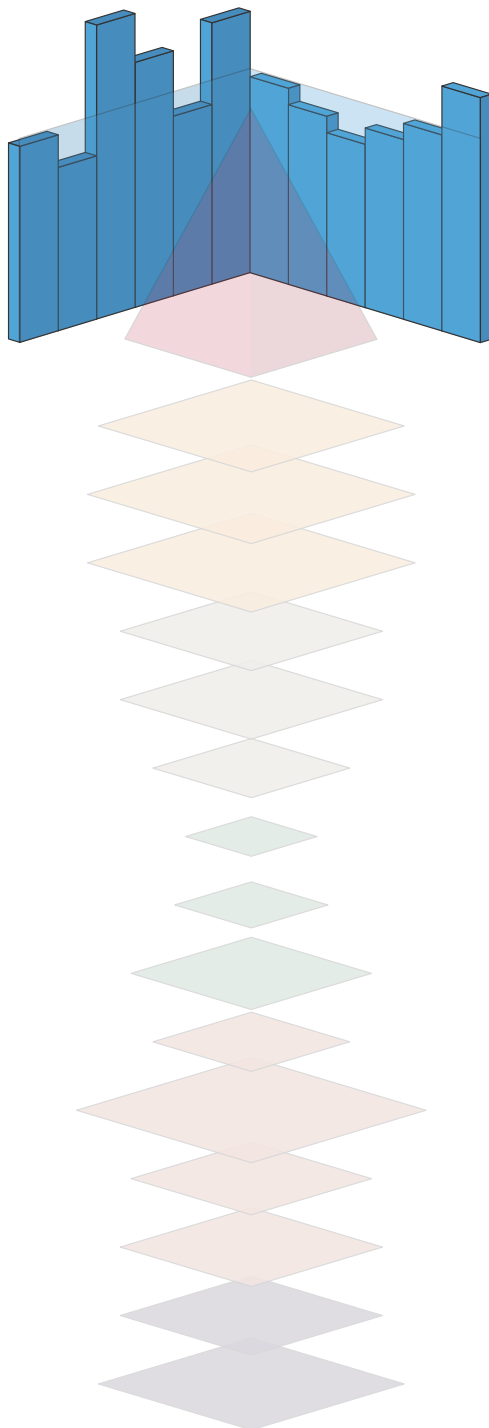


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ITALY



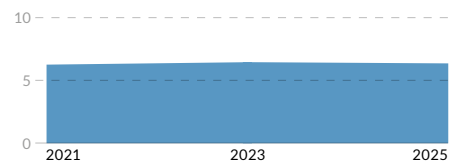
6.38 $\downarrow 0.08$

RESILIENCE SCORE

32nd of 193 countries $\downarrow 1$

23rd of 44 European countries $\downarrow 1$

3rd of 8 Southern European countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	6.00	$\downarrow 0.50$
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	5.00	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	9.00	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	7.50	$\downarrow 0.50$
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	5.50	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	8.00	$\uparrow 0.50$
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	6.00	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.50	$\downarrow 0.50$
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	5.00	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	5.50	0.00
PREVENTION	6.00	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	7.50	0.00



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Italy continues to be a major destination and transit country for human trafficking, with victims exploited primarily for sexual and labour purposes. Undocumented migrants are among the most vulnerable, particularly those arriving through the central Mediterranean route. The rise in asylum-seeker arrivals has intensified risks of trafficking, with migrant centres often targeted by traffickers posing as relatives. Nigerian criminal networks play a central role in the trafficking market, exploiting women and children for sex work, while Pakistani and Bangladeshi victims are frequently forced into labour. The Italian agricultural sector remains a hotspot for labour exploitation with the illegal recruitment practice known as *caporalato*, which involves systematically subjecting workers to debt bondage and degrading conditions. In 2024, authorities uncovered major trafficking operations exploiting Indian and North African workers in forced labour conditions.

Despite a decrease in irregular migrant arrivals in 2024 compared to 2023, human smuggling remains a significant concern as Italy continues to serve as both a transit and destination point. Smugglers exploit key migratory routes, particularly from Tunisia and Libya, with the majority of irregular arrivals landing on the island of Lampedusa. The involvement of Central Asian boat drivers in smuggling operations from Türkiye to Italy has emerged as a new trend. Smuggling networks are highly adaptable, using various routes through the Balkan Peninsula and Southern Europe to facilitate secondary movements into France and Germany. Smuggling operations are frequently linked to other criminal markets, including drug trafficking and document forgery.

Extortion and protection racketeering remain deeply entrenched in Italian criminal markets, particularly through the influence of mafia groups such as the 'Ndrangheta, Cosa Nostra and Camorra. The *pizzo* system of compelling businesses to pay protection fees continues to be widely used. Recent investigations have highlighted the presence of non-Italian organized crime groups, including Nigerian and Chinese criminal networks, engaging in extortion rackets, particularly within migrant communities.

TRADE

Arms trafficking is a consolidated criminal market, with Italian and foreign groups taking advantage of geopolitical conflicts, including the war in Ukraine, to facilitate illicit weapons circulation. Traditional mafia groups, particularly

the 'Ndrangheta and Camorra, remain active in the trade, though ethnic Albanian and Romanian networks have increasingly asserted control over segments of the market. Recent seizures highlight the link between arms trafficking and drug trafficking in the country. Transactions involving the smuggling of weapons are facilitated through encrypted communications.

Counterfeit goods remain a significant illicit market, with Italy primarily serving as a destination country, but increasingly emerging as a production and transit hub as well. The market affects multiple industries, from luxury goods and electronics to pharmaceuticals and food products. Chinese criminal networks play a leading role, often employing shell companies to distribute counterfeit items. Recent operations have dismantled networks counterfeiting luxury brands and retro video games worth millions of euros. The overlap between counterfeiting and financial crimes, including tax evasion and money laundering, remains substantial. Mafia groups and criminal organizations often collaborate with private companies through specialized associations known as *agromafie*, which have proven highly profitable in the food fraud sector. Counterfeiting of 'Made in Italy' food items remains a significant concern, including cases where North African olive oil is falsely labelled and its true origin deliberately concealed to increase its market value.

The illicit trade in excise consumer goods, particularly cigarettes and alcohol, persists despite enforcement efforts. Smuggling operations are concentrated in regions bordering Slovenia and the Western Balkans, with tobacco products often entering Italy from Tunisia and Eastern Europe. Large-scale networks, some linked to mafia groups, have been dismantled, revealing the use of fraudulent documentation and shell companies to avoid excise duties.

ENVIRONMENT

Italy continues to play a role in the flora crimes market, with reports indicating sustained imports of illegally sourced timber, particularly teak from Myanmar. Despite EU sanctions, some Italian companies continue to procure high-value timber through third-party channels. The role of criminal networks in falsifying documentation and evading customs controls has been highlighted in recent investigations.

Fauna crimes are an ongoing issue, with Italy serving as both a transit and destination country for illicit wildlife products. Ports and airports facilitate smuggling operations, with networks involved in trafficking endangered species, including songbirds, sharks and eels. Mafia groups have historically engaged in the illegal trade of livestock and exotic animals, and recent seizures confirm the persistence of these activities. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing,

particularly in Calabria and Sicily, remains prevalent despite regulatory efforts. However, much of the illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing near the Italian coastline takes place in international waters, often involving Italian actors.

Non-renewable resource crimes are an expanding concern, particularly in the fuel and gold smuggling markets. The 'Petrolmafie' investigation has exposed the involvement of mafia groups in large-scale diesel fuel fraud, often facilitated through tax evasion schemes. The smuggling of gold and other precious metals is frequently linked to money laundering, with recent cases highlighting Italy's role in illicit gold trading networks spanning Europe, Western Asia and South America.

DRUGS

The heroin market in Italy is relatively modest but remains active, with the country serving as both a destination and a transit point for heroin shipments to northern Europe. Albanian-speaking networks dominate the final leg of the Balkan route, smuggling heroin from Türkiye and Western Asia. Although seizures at airports have declined, heroin continues to enter Italy through Adriatic ports and land routes from Eastern Europe.

Cocaine trafficking remains the most lucrative criminal market, with Italy playing a central role in European distribution. The 'Ndrangheta maintains direct ties with South American cartels, facilitating large-scale shipments through the ports of Gioia Tauro, Rotterdam and Antwerp. Ethnic Albanian and Maghrebian groups have also expanded their role, managing import and distribution networks. Major seizures in recent years underscore the persistence of this market, with traffickers employing increasingly sophisticated methods to evade detection.

Cannabis remains the most widely consumed drug in Italy, although regulations in this area continue to evolve, including recent government proposals for a stricter crackdown. Ethnic Albanian and Moroccan criminal groups maintain strong ties with Italian mafia organizations, overseeing large-scale cultivation and importation operations. Seizures indicate a steady demand, with Italy emerging as both a producer and distributor of illicit cannabis. Authorities have observed increasing collaboration between domestic and foreign groups, particularly in southern Italy.

The synthetic drug market is expanding, with evidence suggesting that Italy is evolving from a destination to a production country. Authorities have intercepted large shipments of precursors, and seizures of synthetic drugs, including MDMA and methamphetamine, as well as synthetic cannabinoids, have increased. The growing role of encrypted communications and online platforms in synthetic drug distribution presents challenges for law enforcement.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crimes remain a major concern, with ransomware attacks, malware and DDoS attacks continuing to occur at high scale and frequency. Criminal actors exploit digital platforms to also conduct illicit transactions, often using cryptocurrencies to launder proceeds. The government and military sectors have been identified as the most impacted by cyber-dependent crimes. Attacks on the healthcare system are also significant. Other targeted sectors include information and communication technology; financial and insurance services; education; professional, scientific and technical services; news and multimedia; and wholesale/retail. Recently, a conspiracy to create illegal dossiers on politicians, business leaders and public figures using hacked government databases was uncovered, posing serious national security risks.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes, such as tax fraud, embezzlement of public funds and EU resources, and illicit financial flows, remain deeply embedded in Italy's economy. Law enforcement agencies have also reported a surge in fraud schemes targeting businesses and individuals, including phishing attacks and online scams. Traditional mafia organizations have adapted, shifting their focus toward white-collar crimes like financial fraud, embezzlement and tax evasion, moving away from more overtly violent forms of control. In recent years, new patterns of financial misconduct involving public funds have emerged, including irregularities in the distribution of government subsidies, tax incentives and financial benefits intended for families, businesses and citizens. Despite ongoing regulatory efforts, financial institutions remain vulnerable to exploitation by organized crime groups.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Italy remains a stronghold of entrenched mafia organizations, including the 'Ndrangheta, Cosa Nostra, Camorra and Sacra Corona Unita, as well as smaller but highly active groups such as the Mafie foggiane and Camorra barese in Apulia, the Spada and Casamonica clans in Rome, and the Stidda in south-eastern Sicily. These groups exhibit high adaptability, transitioning from overt violence to more discreet infiltration of economic and political structures. The 'Ndrangheta, with its decentralized yet hierarchical structure, remains the most dominant, leveraging international networks for drug trafficking and money laundering while exerting significant influence over public procurement processes. The Cosa Nostra, despite setbacks from law enforcement efforts, continues to maintain its presence in Sicily, adapting its operations to evade scrutiny. The Camorra, particularly in Naples and Caserta, operates through a mixture of large cartels and smaller, violent groups engaged in drug trafficking, extortion and illicit financial schemes. The Apulian mafia, characterized by fluctuating alliances, has

increasingly adopted a business-like model, capitalizing on illicit revenues from drug trafficking and extortion. Across Italy, mafia groups continue to exert territorial control, manipulating legal economic channels and engaging in tax fraud, financial crimes and corruption within public institutions. Their involvement in narcotics remains crucial, particularly for the 'Ndrangheta, which dominates the country's cocaine trade through transnational networks spanning South America and West Africa. Although the mafia's reliance on violent enforcement has decreased, firearms remain a key tool, and investigations have revealed a continued stockpile of sophisticated weaponry. These groups have also been implicated in electoral manipulation, leveraging political connections to secure administrative control over public resources and infrastructure projects.

Criminal networks in Italy operate alongside traditional mafia groups but tend to be less structured and more opportunistic. These networks are primarily involved in activities such as drug distribution, burglaries, extortion and human smuggling. In Naples, loose criminal groups have been responsible for escalating violence, often engaging in territorial disputes over local drug markets. A significant concern is the rise of youth criminality, particularly the phenomenon of so-called 'baby gangs', which operate with high levels of violence and emulate mafia-like behaviours. These loosely organized groups are composed of socially marginalized youth and have gained prominence in Campania, Lombardy and Piedmont. Social media has played a role in their expansion, though their level of organization remains significantly lower than that of traditional mafia groups. Distinguishing between criminal networks and mafia-style organizations can sometimes be challenging, as legal proceedings often categorize groups as criminal associations rather than mafia organizations, in turn complicating legal outcomes.

Although state actors do not exert direct control over criminal markets in Italy, corruption remains a persistent issue, particularly in public procurement, infrastructure projects and electoral processes. Mafia groups have long infiltrated local governance, evidenced by the dissolution of multiple municipalities due to mafia interference. Public officials and politicians have been implicated in bribery, vote-buying and collusion with organized crime, leveraging their positions to facilitate illicit activities. One of the key concerns is the potential misuse of EU and national funds allocated for economic recovery, particularly under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. Mafia organizations have exploited corrupt officials to secure contracts and influence labour markets. The proposed repeal of the abuse of office offense has raised concerns among anti-mafia experts, as it could hinder legal actions against corrupt public officials. Recent cases have highlighted political-mafia ties, with elected officials convicted for illicit agreements with organized crime groups to secure votes in exchange for economic favours. Investigations into municipal corruption have revealed deep-seated relationships between public

administrators and criminal syndicates, particularly within public healthcare and construction sectors.

Foreign criminal actors are well-established in Italy, with groups such as ethnic Albanian, Nigerian, Chinese, Serbo-Croatian, North African and South American syndicates playing significant roles in various illicit markets. Albanian-speaking organizations are particularly prominent in drug trafficking and arms smuggling, operating through family-based networks with strong transnational links. Nigerian criminal groups, including secret cults such as the Black Axe, Supreme Viking and Maphite, have established hierarchical operations in Italy, engaging in human trafficking, drug distribution and financial fraud. Some Nigerian groups have been legally recognized as mafia-style organizations due to their structured nature and use of intimidation. Chinese syndicates, often insular and difficult to penetrate, specialize in extortion, illicit money transfers and methamphetamine trade, primarily within Chinese communities. Romanian groups are active in labour exploitation and organized theft operations, sometimes collaborating with Italian criminal organizations. South American cartels maintain connections with Italian mafia groups for cocaine trafficking, with logistical bases in northern and central Italy. These foreign groups frequently collaborate with Italian mafias, particularly in narcotics, human smuggling and illicit labour markets. Albanian-speaking and Maghrebian syndicates maintain strong ties with the 'Ndrangheta and Camorra for drug supply chains, while Mexican and Colombian cartels provide direct access to cocaine shipments. The increasing territorial control exercised by foreign actors in some areas, particularly within prostitution and labour exploitation markets, underscores their growing influence in Italy's criminal landscape.

The involvement of private-sector actors in organized crime continues to facilitate illicit financial flows and economic crimes. Professionals such as lawyers, accountants and consultants act as intermediaries for mafia organizations, assisting in financial fraud, money laundering and corporate crimes. These facilitators provide the expertise needed for tax evasion, accounting fraud and the creation of shell companies to obscure illicit transactions. Mafia organizations have increasingly integrated into legitimate business sectors, using legal loopholes to launder money through real estate, gambling and offshore financial operations. White-collar professionals play a critical role in enabling money laundering, often establishing front companies that disguise criminal proceeds as legitimate earnings. Financial institutions, particularly those with weak compliance measures, have also been exploited for illicit capital movement. As digital technology advances, criminals have adapted, utilizing cryptocurrency platforms and encrypted communications to bypass traditional financial monitoring.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Italy's apparent political stability masks deeper vulnerabilities in its fight against organized crime. Despite strong public rhetoric, the government struggles to effectively dismantle entrenched mafia networks, which continue to penetrate local administrations. Although high-profile arrests and strict prison measures have been celebrated, their long-term impact remains uncertain. Moreover, recent government proposals, such as changes to regulations on interceptions and surveillance, have raised concerns among experts about a possible weakening of the existing legal framework. Despite ongoing challenges in preventing criminal infiltration, Italy's framework for government transparency and accountability remains strong, reinforced by independent oversight mechanisms aimed at curbing corruption. Italy actively participates in international networks focused on anti-corruption, and regulatory frameworks governing public procurement have been strengthened. However, critics argue that certain proposed reforms, such as changes to public contract tendering rules and the potential repeal of the abuse of office offense, could weaken the country's anti-corruption measures. Whistleblower protections have improved with the implementation of an EU directive, but gaps remain in the enforcement of transparency laws, particularly concerning the accessibility of public information.

Italy remains engaged in international cooperation, participating in key multilateral treaties and law enforcement initiatives against transnational organized crime. Agencies such as the Direzione Investigativa Antimafia collaborate with international partners to combat mafia groups operating across borders. Programmes like INTERPOL's I-CAN and Europol's @ON project further reinforce Italy's commitment to dismantling transnational criminal networks. Bilateral cooperation with countries in Europe and Latin America enhances Italy's ability to combat drug trafficking and financial crimes, though ongoing challenges persist in addressing evolving criminal threats. Italy's legal framework for combating organized crime is among the most developed in the world. The country's legislation explicitly defines mafia-style criminality and provides extensive powers for asset confiscation and preventive measures against mafia infiltration in public institutions. The establishment of a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into foreign criminal organizations demonstrates an awareness of emerging threats. However, proposed legislative changes, including modifications to electronic payment oversight and revisions to juvenile crime policies, have sparked debate over their potential impact on crime prevention and justice.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Italy's judicial system continues to prosecute organized crime cases effectively, with specialized units such as the Direzione Nazionale Antimafia e Antiterrorismo coordinating investigations. Landmark trials, such as the 'Rinascita Scott' case against the 'Ndrangheta, highlight the country's commitment to dismantling criminal organizations. Despite these efforts, concerns persist regarding the efficiency of the judicial system due to resource constraints and the absence of significant investment in judicial infrastructure. The country's correctional facilities face overcrowding, with prison populations exceeding capacity, leading to deteriorating conditions and rising inmate suicides.

Italy's law enforcement agencies, including the Direzione Investigativa Antimafia, the Guardia di Finanza and the Raggruppamento Operativo Speciale (the special operations group of the Carabinieri), play a critical role in countering organized crime. These agencies continue to be well-resourced and effective, with international cooperation enhancing intelligence-sharing efforts. However, challenges such as political interference, low salaries, and low-level corruption continue to affect law enforcement, particularly within the prison police force, which has also experienced a high suicide rate. Despite these issues, law enforcement has seen improved operational effectiveness, as evidenced by an increase in asset seizures linked to organized crime.

Italy's geographical position makes it vulnerable to illicit trafficking routes, particularly in human smuggling, narcotics and counterfeit goods. Ports such as Gioia Tauro continue to serve as key transit points for international drug shipments, predominantly controlled by the 'Ndrangheta. Smaller ports have also become targets for smuggling operations, with criminals exploiting gaps in security. Despite intensified border control efforts, human smuggling remains a significant challenge. As cybercrime is a growing threat, the government has taken steps to bolster digital security, including the development of a 'space cyber security operation centre' to protect critical infrastructure.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Italy has a well-established anti-money laundering framework, with periodic risk assessments conducted by financial intelligence units. Although mafia groups continue to exploit financial loopholes, regulatory oversight has improved. Measures to prevent money laundering in online gambling and crowdfunding have been implemented, but the increasing use of cryptocurrency poses new challenges. The recent government decision to raise the cash transaction limit has been criticized for potentially facilitating illicit financial flows. Authorities continue to seize illicit assets, yet the

effectiveness of asset confiscation policies depends on the proper administration of recovered properties.

Italy's economic regulatory environment remains relatively robust, with anti-mafia interdictions serving as a key tool in preventing criminal infiltration into the legal economy. However, mafia extortion practices have evolved, shifting from direct demands for protection payments to more sophisticated forms of economic control, such as monopolizing supply chains. The country's economy remains open to foreign investment, with stable financial institutions, but corruption and structural weaknesses undermine long-term economic competitiveness. The informal sector continues to account for a significant portion of economic activity, contributing to tax evasion and financial opacity. The confiscation and social reuse of mafia assets is a notable resilience measure unique to Italy, enabling properties and businesses once controlled by criminal groups to be repurposed for community benefit. However, administrative inefficiencies and financial constraints have hindered the full implementation of these initiatives. Although efforts to improve the management of confiscated assets are ongoing, bureaucratic challenges continue to limit their impact.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Italy has established mechanisms to support victims of organized crime, with state funds available for individuals affected by mafia-related violence, usury and extortion. However, awareness of available resources remains limited, leading to underutilization of victim compensation programmes. The government collaborates with NGOs to provide support services, particularly for victims of human trafficking. Recent initiatives have aimed to improve victim identification and referral mechanisms, yet challenges persist in securing restitution and ensuring comprehensive legal protections for those affected by organized crime.

Crime prevention strategies are actively promoted, with educational campaigns and youth engagement programmes aimed at reducing the risk of organized crime recruitment. Initiatives such as 'Liberi di Scegliere' provide at-risk individuals with opportunities to disengage from mafia environments. Although Italy has strengthened its national action plan against human trafficking, gaps remain in coordination efforts among government agencies and civil society organizations. Drug prevention policies are notably weak, with limited public awareness campaigns addressing substance abuse issues, despite the country's significant narcotics trade.

Non-state actors, including civil society organizations and investigative journalists, play a vital role in Italy's fight against organized crime. NGOs such as Libera and Addiopizzo offer legal assistance, advocacy and community engagement initiatives focused on countering mafia influence. However, tensions between NGOs and the government persist, particularly concerning migration policies and

humanitarian aid efforts. The criminalization of migrant rescue operations has drawn criticism from civil society groups, raising concerns about restrictions on NGO activities. Press freedom is constitutionally protected in Italy, but journalists investigating organized crime continue to face significant threats. Mafia groups, particularly in southern regions, have targeted journalists through intimidation and legal harassment. Strategic lawsuits against public participation remain a challenge, with media professionals frequently subjected to legal pressures designed to deter investigative reporting. Although there have been no recent assassinations of journalists, the overall environment for press freedom has weakened in recent years. Italy's civil society sector remains resilient in the face of organized crime, with public trust in NGOs playing a crucial role in fostering community-led initiatives against mafia influence. However, ongoing challenges related to governmental policies, legal protections for activists and structural deficiencies in victim support services remain.

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.