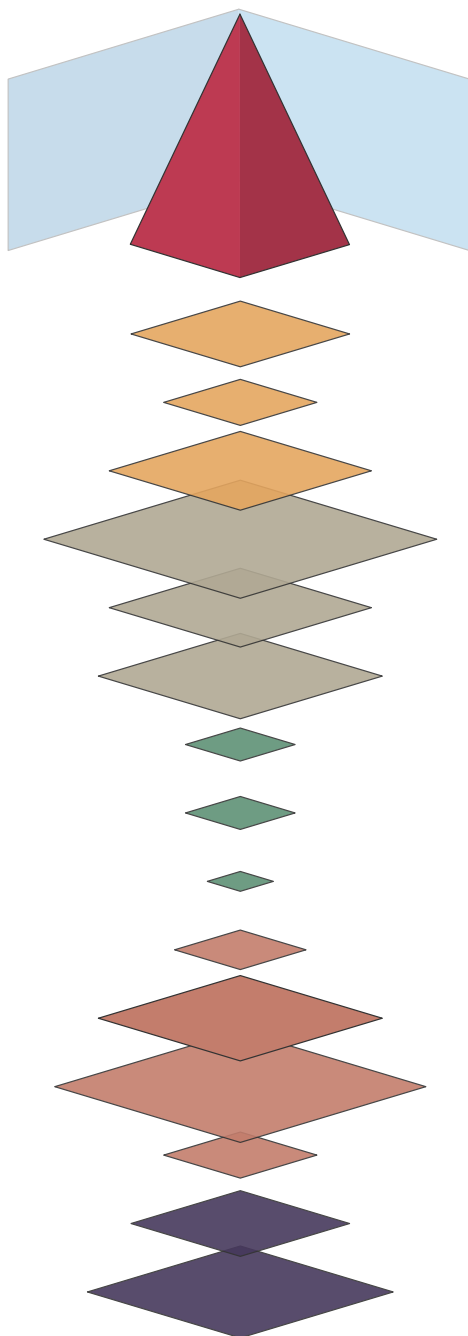
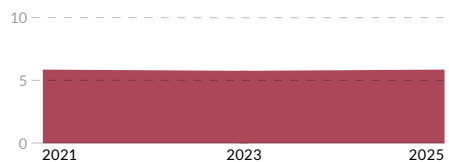


JAMAICA



5.93 $\nearrow 0.13$
CRIMINALITY SCORE

53rd of 193 countries $\nearrow 6$
12th of 35 American countries $\nearrow 2$
2nd of 13 Caribbean countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS **5.07** $\nearrow 0.17$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.00	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	3.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	6.00	0.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	9.00	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	6.00	$\searrow 0.50$
ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	6.50	$\searrow 0.50$
FLORA CRIMES	2.50	$\nearrow 1.00$
FAUNA CRIMES	2.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	1.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
HEROIN TRADE	3.00	0.00
COCAINE TRADE	6.50	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	8.50	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	3.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	5.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
FINANCIAL CRIMES	7.00	0.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS **6.80** $\nearrow 0.10$

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	8.00	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	8.00	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	7.50	$\searrow 0.50$
FOREIGN ACTORS	7.00	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	3.50	$\nearrow 1.00$



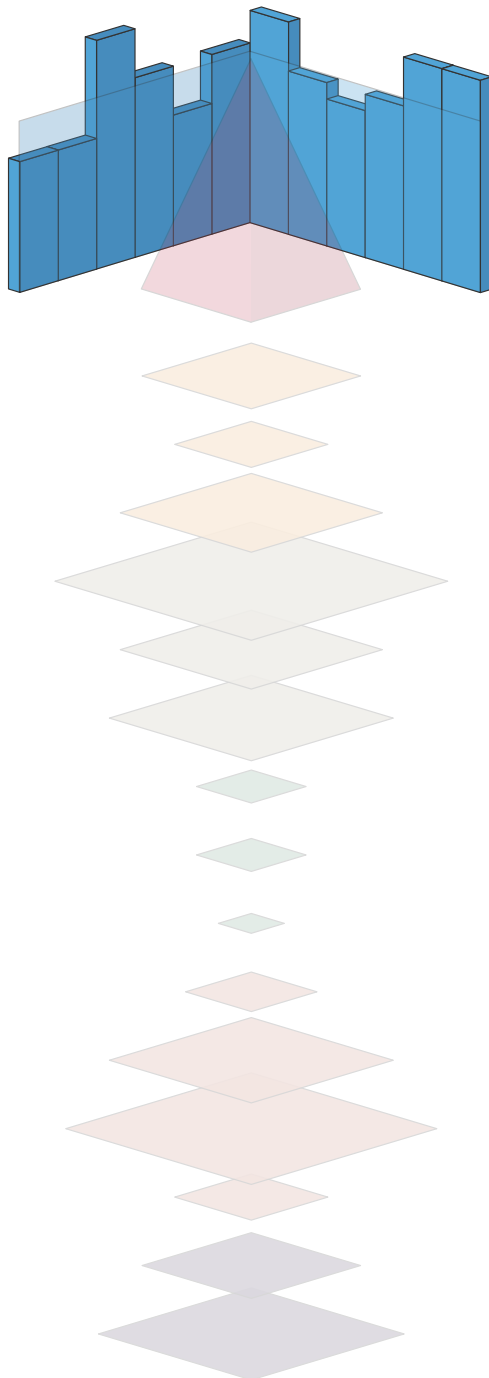
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Funded by
the European Union

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JAMAICA

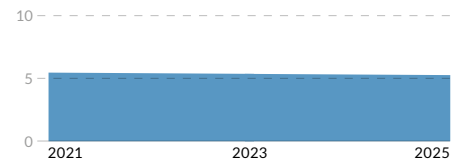


5.33 $\downarrow 0.08$ **RESILIENCE SCORE**

66th of 193 countries $\downarrow 4$

13th of 35 American countries $\downarrow 2$

6th of 13 Caribbean countries $\downarrow 2$



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	4.00	$\downarrow 0.50$
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	4.00	$\downarrow 1.00$
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	7.00	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	5.50	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	4.00	$\uparrow 0.50$
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.50	$\downarrow 0.50$
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	6.50	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.00	$\uparrow 0.50$
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	4.50	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	5.00	0.00
PREVENTION	6.50	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	6.50	0.00



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking, particularly sex trafficking, remains a persistent issue in Jamaica. Vulnerable communities, especially women and children, are the primary targets, with child victims coerced by gangs into criminal activities or sex trafficking in tourist areas. Boys from disadvantaged backgrounds are often coerced into begging or engaging in criminal activities, including serving as lookouts, armed gunmen or couriers for weapons and drugs. There are also reports of children being exploited by criminal organizations for financial fraud schemes, particularly lottery scams. Labour exploitation spans both formal and informal labour sectors, including domestic servitude and forced labour on fishing vessels. Traffickers commonly use social media and deceptive job offers to recruit victims.

Meanwhile, the human smuggling market remains limited, with few nationals attempting irregular migration through countries such as Belize, Mexico and Panama. However, a small number of recent attempts to reach North America via illegal routes have raised concerns. Jamaica has historically served as a transit point for Haitian migrants, and in recent years, boat arrivals have been intercepted amid allegations of smuggling operations. Reports suggest that migrants paid to enter Jamaica illegally and that individuals with dual citizenship may be facilitating these movements. Separate incidents have also involved the return of more than 200 Indian nationals suspected of being smuggled into the country. However, these appear to be isolated cases and do not indicate a systemic trend.

Extortion remains a prevalent issue, particularly affecting the public transportation and construction sectors. Criminal gangs dominate the extortion market, using proceeds to finance weapons purchases and other illicit activities, which in turn fuel broader violence. Despite targeted efforts to curb coercion in the public passenger vehicle sector, extortion remains deeply entrenched and largely unreported due to fear of reprisal. Transport operators face ongoing threats, with several fatalities reported each month in recent years.

TRADE

Arms trafficking remains a pervasive issue and a major driver of violence in Jamaica, with most illegal firearms originating from the US and entering the country via maritime routes, including small boats and commercial vessels. These weapons are acquired by gangs, criminal groups and youth, contributing to homicide rates, particularly in urban centres

such as Montego Bay. Recent studies and seizures have highlighted an ongoing exchange of firearms for drugs between Haiti and Jamaica. Despite efforts to curb the market, trafficking networks and affiliates operating from the US continue to sustain the illicit arms trade.

The counterfeit goods trade persists as an issue. Recent high-value seizures have underscored the scale of this illicit activity, with authorities confiscating large quantities of counterfeit footwear, designer items, electronics and pharmaceuticals in recent years. These products not only disrupt operations involving billions in counterfeit merchandise, but also raise concerns about consumer health and safety. Despite increased enforcement, the counterfeit market in Jamaica remains active, facilitated by local and online distribution. The country serves as a transit hub for counterfeit goods originating from China and destined for other countries in the Americas.

Jamaica also plays a role in the illicit tobacco trade, serving as both a source and transit point for excisable goods trafficked across the Americas. Authorities have documented multiple cross-border incidents involving uncustomed tobacco products, highlighting ongoing challenges in curbing the flow of illegal tobacco through the country.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora-related crimes in Jamaica remain limited in scope, with only isolated cases of exotic plant smuggling reported. However, illegal logging has seen a noticeable rise in recent years. Two major operations uncovered illegal logging in protected areas, resulting in the seizure of more than 1 000 pieces of lumber. These incidents, involving local criminal groups, highlight enforcement challenges amid otherwise low-level flora-related criminal activity.

Similarly, the criminal market for fauna-related offenses has remained relatively limited, even though there have been growing concerns in recent years regarding fauna-related incidents. For example, agencies have noted a rise in exotic pet ownership, prompting investigations into potential illegal imports – though many species involved are not nationally protected. There have also been growing concerns regarding harm to native bird species, particularly following online footage of such acts. In the fishing sector, the risk assessment for illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing has showed only a modest increase, indicating that the situation has remained relatively consistent in recent years. The criminal market for non-renewable resources has also remained stable over time, with no substantial signs of systemic growth or transformation. A notable case involving the seizure of illegally distributed liquefied petroleum gas cylinders highlights the presence of isolated

illegal activity within the sector, but does not reflect a broader pattern or escalation in criminal involvement.

DRUGS

Although heroin seizures have occurred alongside other narcotics, the heroin market is not a primary focus in Jamaica, and there is no indication of its increased prevalence or expansion. Small quantities are trafficked abroad, often through marijuana exchanges and immigrant networks. Reports suggest that deportees contribute to the trade and influence local consumption patterns. However, the heroin trade is overshadowed by the cocaine and cannabis trades, and is managed by both gang-based and mafia-style groups. Jamaica continues to serve as a key transit point for cocaine, facilitating its movement from South and Central America to North America and Europe. Recent seizures point to the country's growing role in the international cocaine trade. Criminal organizations from Colombia and Mexico use Jamaican routes, often employing drug mules, including tourists and cruise ship employees. The cocaine trade is linked to rising violence, youth consumption and a black-market exchange with Haitian groups, exacerbating economic instability.

The cannabis trade remains a stable and profitable market, with Jamaica being the largest source of marijuana in the Caribbean. Authorities have seized significant quantities of the drug in recent years, although the eradication of cannabis plants has decreased drastically, likely due to decriminalization efforts. Jamaica's marijuana market is complicated by 'guns for ganja' – a barter system between criminal gangs in Jamaica and Haiti that involves the exchange of marijuana for firearms – as well as ongoing legal ambiguities surrounding cannabis possession. While legalization has spurred legitimate cannabis exports, traditional growers often remain excluded, increasing their vulnerability to illicit activity. Domestic consumption also reflects widespread social acceptance. Lastly, synthetic drug trafficking and production is on the rise; MDMA in particular has gained popularity among younger populations. Experts have reported multiple incidents during the reporting period involving the use of synthetic drugs in crimes such as abduction and assault, indicating that this market is directly linked increase violence. There has also been a concerning increase in school-based violence linked to synthetic drugs.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Jamaica has experienced a serious increase in cybercrimes in recent years, with notable economic impact. The country has faced both domestic and international cybercriminal activity, including ransomware attacks. Additionally, botnet activities have become a growing concern. These threats have eroded investor confidence and contributed to a decline in foreign investment.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes are widespread in Jamaica, with credit card fraud and embezzlement the most common offenses. Lottery scams, particularly targeting the elderly, remained prevalent, contributing to increased gang activity and violence. These financial crimes have significantly affected the economy and are linked to higher crime rates, with gangs using scam profits to finance firearms purchases.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Jamaica's organized crime landscape is shaped by a combination of large mafia-style groups and smaller 'posses,' with the latter primarily involved in territorial violence. These gangs are deeply engaged in drug and human trafficking, extortion, the firearms trade and financial fraud, including lottery scams. Mafia-style gangs often have ties to corrupt officials, enabling their operations, while smaller gangs operate in specific territories. The growth in gang membership, particularly among youth, has been exacerbated by socio-economic challenges.

Transnational links also contribute to the complexity of Jamaica's criminal landscape, which is heavily influenced by criminal networks that are involved in drug trafficking as well as financial crimes, particularly lottery scams. These networks often form alliances with mafia-style groups, deepening the connection between fraud and violent crime. This convergence of criminal enterprises raises significant concerns about escalating violence and the increasing sophistication of criminal operations.

Corrupt politicians often collaborate with criminal groups, financing illicit activities such as murder and extortion for political gain. Police officers have also been implicated in drug trafficking, weapons provision and other crimes, further eroding trust in the justice system. Jamaica's drug trafficking networks are closely linked to broader transnational criminal operations, with local criminal groups having established strong ties with foreign counterparts over time. International criminal organizations – particularly those from Colombia and Mexico – use Jamaica as a key transit and storage hub for drugs en route to global markets, including the US. While data on the extent of private sector involvement in crime is limited, certain industries – such as used car dealerships, hardware stores and real estate – have been flagged for potentially facilitating money laundering, especially through cash transactions that exceed regulatory limits. Furthermore, private sector actors are also involved in financial crimes, particularly tax evasion, contributing to the broader criminal economy.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Jamaica faces significant governance challenges, including corruption, violent crime and limited rule of law. Despite these issues, the country maintains a stable democratic governance framework. Efforts to address organized crime include a national strategy to combat crime and money laundering, although compliance with international financial standards has proven difficult. The government's reactive, militarized approach has failed to address the socio-economic causes of crime.

Although major crimes declined in 2024, gang violence and economic hardship continue to pose serious obstacles. Meanwhile, corruption remains a widespread and persistent issue, despite ongoing efforts to enhance transparency and accountability. Government initiatives, such as the Major Organized Crime and Anti-Corruption Agency (MOCA) and the Public Sector Efficiency Programme, aim to curb this issue. However, corruption within state institutions, including the judiciary and law enforcement, persists. Officials are alleged to have tipped off gangs about law enforcement raids, released imprisoned criminals, failed to report the discovery of illicit weapons and even carried out extrajudicial killings. Resistance to anti-corruption reforms, particularly from political figures, has hindered progress. The Integrity Commission has played a key role in developing relevant policy, though its efforts have often been stymied, and while legislation like the Access to Information Act has improved transparency, challenges in oversight and implementation remain.

Jamaica has ratified major UN conventions on transnational crime, corruption and narcotics trafficking. Extradition agreements, including with the US, have enabled extradition for crimes such as sex trafficking and lottery scams. Through the Shiprider Agreement, Jamaica cooperates with the US to combat drug trafficking along maritime routes. The country also receives extensive donor funding to support initiatives against financial crime, cybercrime and gender-based violence, and has committed to implementing international standards for financial information exchange and reducing small arms trafficking in cooperation with the UN.

Domestically, Jamaica has continued to work on finalizing its National Strategy against Organized Crime with UNODC support. While the country has a robust anti-organized crime legislative framework, implementation remains challenging. Recent legislation targets individuals involved in criminal activities, and cannabis possession has been partially decriminalized. The Citizen Security and Justice Programme, designed to reduce violence and improve judicial services, has faced funding cuts. Key laws include the Proceeds of Crime Act and various drug trafficking statutes. Amendments to the Criminal Justice

(Suppression of Criminal Organizations) Act and updates to the Cybercrimes Act aim to enhance Jamaica's criminal justice and cybersecurity responses.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Jamaica's judicial system and correctional facilities face major challenges, including overcrowding, poor conditions and inadequate resources. Prisons suffer from sanitation, food and healthcare issues, while the judiciary is plagued by corruption, intimidation and case backlogs, with delays and trial postponements causing frustration. Independent sources highlight weaknesses in criminal investigations, adjudication timeliness and correctional effectiveness. Corruption is perceived as widespread across the justice system, including within correctional services and the judiciary.

Similarly, Jamaica faces challenges in combating organized crime, despite having specialized law enforcement units like the MOCA and the Jamaica Constabulary Force. Corruption within these agencies, including collaboration with criminal gangs, severely undermines public trust and contributes to under-reporting of crimes, particularly extortion. A significant portion of crimes, including drug trafficking and lottery scams, involves law enforcement personnel. The use of lethal force by security forces has also increased in recent years. However, law enforcement agencies have taken steps to combat organized crime through targeted anti-gang operations, financial crime investigations and the use of specialized units, such as the Special Narcotics Unit and the Financial Investigations Division.

Jamaica's geographic location makes it vulnerable to illegal trade, particularly drug trafficking, due to its strategic positioning between Europe and North America. In response, the government has increased investments in border security, including for new coast guard ships, surveillance planes and advanced technology like automated kiosks and facial recognition at airports. The Jamaican Customs Department's Border Protection Unit targets drug and arms trafficking. Additionally, the Cyber Incident Response Team monitors and addresses cybersecurity threats. Despite these measures, challenges such as territorial disputes, corruption and difficulties patrolling Jamaica's extensive coastline continue to undermine efforts to strengthen territorial integrity.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Money laundering remains a significant issue, often linked to organized criminal activities such as lottery scams, counterfeit goods smuggling, small arms trafficking and cybercrime. In June 2024, Jamaica was removed from

the Financial Action Task Force's Grey List for money laundering risks after making progress in strengthening its anti-money laundering efforts. The Financial Intelligence Unit plays a central role in analyzing financial data to combat these crimes, though resource limitations hinder the effective prosecution of financial offenses. Jamaica also benefits from two EU-funded projects aimed at combating trade-based money laundering and cash smuggling, which have enhanced law enforcement capabilities in detection, investigation and asset recovery.

Economically, Jamaica is classified as moderately free, with notable freedoms in investment and business. However, it faces challenges including corruption and high government spending. While the country has made progress, such as reducing its debt-to-GDP ratio, economic difficulties persist, especially in the manufacturing and agriculture sectors. The informal sector also plays a significant role in the economy, with many Jamaicans excluded from formal financial services. The economy continues to feel the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and other external factors – particularly in the tourism sector – contributing to rising poverty and unemployment. Nevertheless, the Business Process Outsourcing sector has shown resilience, with a notable increase in employment despite broader economic challenges.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Jamaican government has increased its efforts to combat human trafficking, particularly child trafficking, through measures such as proactive screening and specialized services for victims. The Child Protection and Family Services Agency is tasked with providing care to victims, including medical services. Despite these improvements, the child protection system continues to face major shortcoming, as highlighted by the Office of the Children's Advocate. Victim and witness support services have been expanded, with a dedicated witness protection programme. As for prevention measures, the government has launched public awareness initiatives, including training and media campaigns, as well as provided resources to aid trafficking investigations. However, efforts to address drug-related issues and youth crime – including wellness programmes and conflict resolution activities – are hampered by limited funding. Cuts to crime prevention programmes and a shift in funding priorities have further weakened the effectiveness of interventions against other types of organized crime and violence.

Non-state actors – including civil society organizations, religious groups and NGOs – play a vital role in mitigating the social impacts of organized crime in Jamaica. Their work includes raising public awareness, advocating for victims and advancing social justice reforms. These groups are particularly engaged in community-based efforts that support vulnerable populations and aim to reduce violence through education, outreach and rehabilitation

programmes. However, their impact is often constrained by limited resources, fragmented collaboration with state initiatives and the entrenched presence of criminal networks in certain areas. While they offer meaningful alternatives for at-risk youth and tackle the root causes of crime, their efforts are frequently undermined by the scale of the issue and a lack of sustained institutional support. At the same time, Jamaica has made notable progress in press freedom over the past two decades. Yet, growing tensions between government officials and the media have begun to erode institutional respect for journalistic independence, posing a significant challenge to preserving these gains.

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.