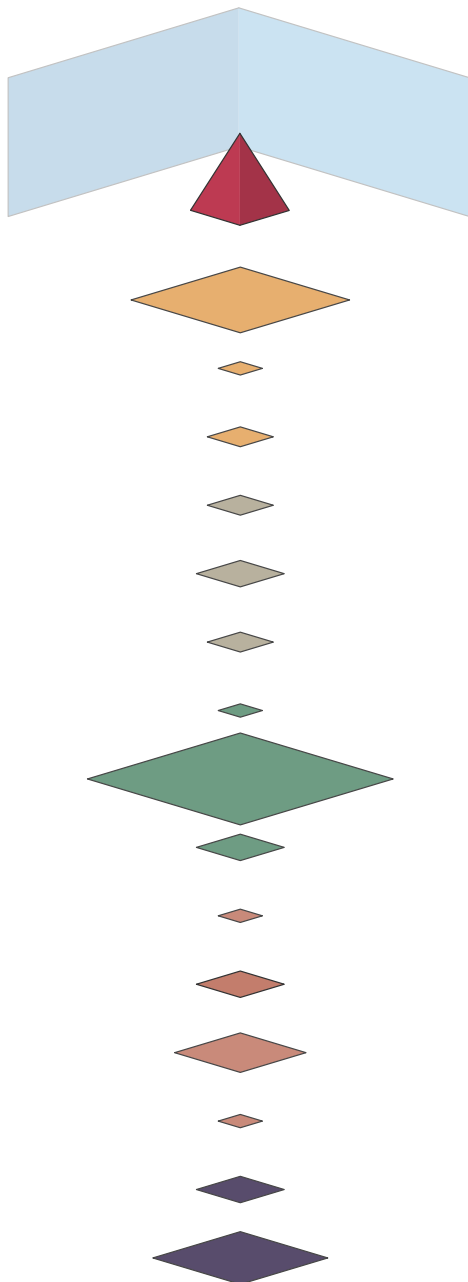


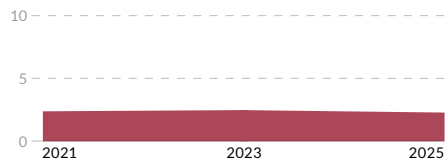


KIRIBATI



2.33 $\nearrow 0.12$ CRIMINALITY SCORE

187th of 193 countries -
11th of 14 Oceanian countries $\nearrow 1$
3rd of 5 Micronesian countries $\nearrow 1$



CRIMINAL MARKETS **2.37** $\nearrow 0.23$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.00	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	1.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	1.50	$\nearrow 1.00$
ARMS TRAFFICKING	1.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	2.00	0.00
ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	1.50	$\nearrow 1.50$
FLORA CRIMES	1.00	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	7.00	$\nearrow 1.00$
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	2.00	0.00
HEROIN TRADE	1.00	0.00
COCAINE TRADE	2.00	$\nearrow 1.00$
CANNABIS TRADE	3.00	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	1.00	0.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	2.00	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	4.00	0.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS **2.30** 0.00

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	4.00	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	1.50	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	3.00	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	2.00	0.00



This project was funded in part
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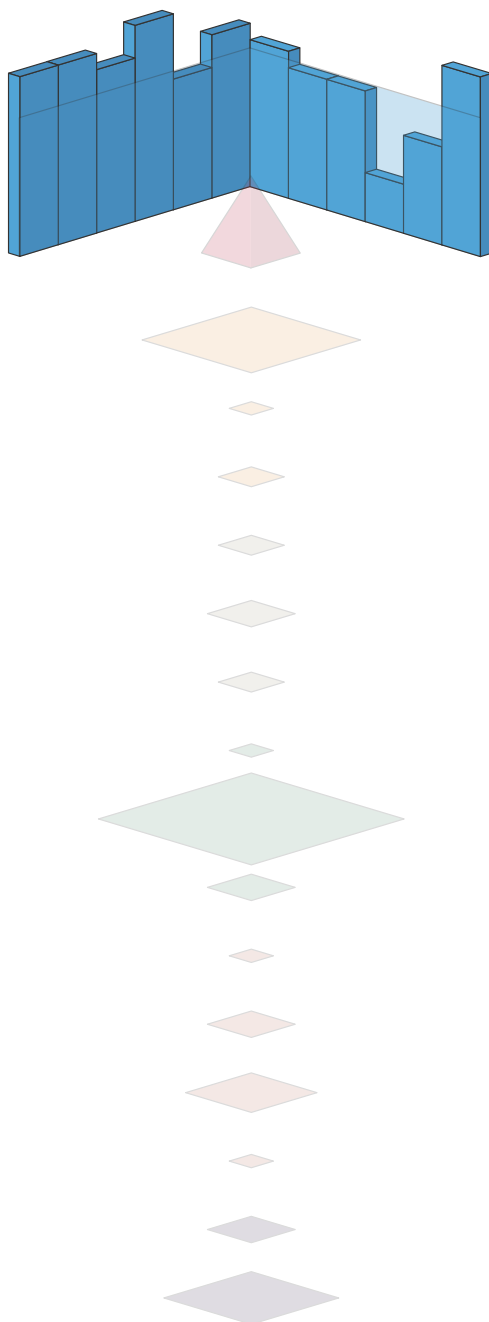


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KIRIBATI



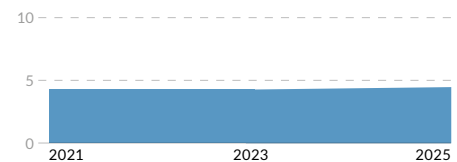
4.46 $\nearrow 0.13$

RESILIENCE SCORE

114th of 193 countries $\nearrow 8$

13th of 14 Oceanian countries -

5th of 5 Micronesian countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	5.50	0.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	5.50	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	5.00	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.00	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	4.00	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.00	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	4.50	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	4.00	0.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	4.00	$\nearrow 1.00$
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	1.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
PREVENTION	3.00	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	5.50	0.00



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking in Kiribati is largely a domestic issue, with women and children forced into commercial sex work in bars and hotels, and on foreign fishing vessels operating in Kiribati's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The issue is closely linked to economic hardship, as victims seek additional income streams for their families. Climate-induced displacement, which affects livelihoods and housing stability, has exacerbated the population's vulnerability to human trafficking. Domestic private-sector actors in the hospitality industry facilitate this market, while foreign actors primarily act as consumers, with reports of tourists soliciting young women and children for commercial sexual activities.

Little evidence suggests that human smuggling is a significant issue in Kiribati. The country does not appear to have organized networks that facilitate irregular immigration. However, as habitable land diminishes due to climate change and rising sea levels, some Kiribati nationals have sought illegal entry into neighbouring countries.

Extortion in Kiribati is limited and occurs within the community rather than through organized crime groups.

TRADE

There is no significant evidence of an illicit arms trade in Kiribati. The country has strict firearm ownership laws, and demand for illegal arms is low. A few historical cases suggest that firearms have entered the country by sea, possibly via foreign fishing vessels.

Similarly, there is no evidence to suggest that Kiribati produces counterfeit goods locally. However, counterfeit goods, including luxury brands, medicines and vaccines, have started appearing in the local market, as China expands its re-export of fake products into Oceania.

There is currently no evidence of significant illicit trade in excisable goods in Kiribati. However, the country has one of the highest smoking rates globally and, for the first time in a decade, the government has pledged to increase tobacco excise taxes to discourage smoking. Higher prices for legal tobacco may create an incentive for illicit trade.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora crimes are not known in Kiribati. In contrast, fauna crimes, particularly illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, represent a major challenge. Overfishing and unlicensed fishing have a negative impact on government revenue, as fishing licences contribute 70–80% of Kiribati's GDP. Foreign, privately owned fishing companies, including those from South Korea, Taiwan, Japan and the US, frequently operate in Kiribati's EEZ where they often exceed permitted quotas or fish without licences.

The non-renewable resource crimes market in Kiribati is small and domestic, with relatively low levels of demand. Local communities extract both legally and illegally sand, gravel and other aggregates, which are sold to construction firms. The practice is socially accepted, as landowners claim customary rights to their resources.

DRUGS

While limited in size and value, the cannabis market in Kiribati is supplied by cannabis smuggled into the country, as there is no evidence of cannabis cultivation in the country. Disenfranchised fishermen have turned to drug trafficking, using their vessels to transport cannabis predominantly from Fiji to Kiribati. This is largely due to the decline in legal fishing opportunities caused by IUU fishing in the Pacific, which has forced some fishermen to seek alternative income sources within illicit markets. Cocaine trafficking is minimal. Aside from isolated incidents, Kiribati does not play a significant role in the cocaine trade. However, the country could be used as a transit point due to its location along Pacific drug routes, and some fishing companies have been linked to the smuggling of illicit goods, including drugs. There is no evidence of consumption or distribution of heroin and synthetic drugs in Kiribati.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crime is not a major issue in Kiribati, with no large-scale incidents reported since 2014. Nevertheless, the country's weak cybersecurity defences make it potentially vulnerable to future threats.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

An increase in cyber-enabled financial crimes, particularly phishing scams and romance scams, has prompted warnings from both government and local financial institutions in Kiribati. Tax evasion and embezzlement are not widespread, although reports indicate that some companies misrepresent their residency status in Kiribati to take advantage of preferential tax treatment in Australia. The overall scope

and scale of illicit financial activities in Kiribati are difficult to quantify due to the absence of comprehensive financial crime reporting mechanisms.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

There is no evidence of mafia-style organized crime groups operating within Kiribati. However, small, loosely structured criminal networks are involved with human trafficking and fauna crimes, particularly IUU fishing and the mismanagement of fisheries. These networks function without prominent figureheads and appear to be localized rather than transnational. While their activities pose risks to Kiribati's economy, particularly in the fishing sector, they do not exhibit the level of organization seen in more structured criminal syndicates.

There is no direct evidence of organized criminal activities linked to Kiribati's national authorities. However, corruption is a known issue, particularly in relation to resource access. Reports of nepotism in public appointments further indicate governance challenges. Although corruption

does not appear to be directly linked to organized crime, weak transparency and oversight create vulnerabilities in state institutions. There is no evidence of criminal actors attempting to influence the democratic process in Kiribati.

Foreign criminal actors generally do not operate in Kiribati due to its remoteness, limited financial services and restricted accessibility, but some foreign involvement has been identified in specific criminal markets. Foreign fishing entities have been implicated in overfishing within Kiribati's EEZ, often exceeding permitted quotas or fishing without proper licences. There is also some interaction between foreign and domestic actors in human trafficking, particularly involving crews aboard foreign fishing vessels who solicit victims of human trafficking for commercial sexual activities.

Little evidence suggests that organized crime controls any specific sector in Kiribati, but some venues in the hospitality sector facilitate commercial sexual exploitation. However, the data is insufficient to assess the full extent of private-sector involvement in transnational organized crime.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Kiribati is a multiparty democracy and holds regular elections, although its political system is somewhat informal and less structured compared to many others. Politicians tend to align in loose groupings rather than formalized parties. The 2024 elections saw the incumbent president secure a third term in office, continuing policies that include strengthening ties with China. The state has not undertaken any major initiatives to dismantle organized crime networks, as organized crime is not seen as a public safety issue due to the absence of violence associated with criminal groups.

Government transparency and accountability mechanisms exist, with the Public Service Integrity and Corruption Control Unit and an Auditor General responsible for oversight. However, the Auditor General faces resource constraints, which limit the effective enforcement of anti-corruption measures. Kiribati publishes its annual budget and financial performance reports online, ensuring accessibility, but lacks specific legislation requiring public officials to disclose assets or mandating broader transparency measures. Concerns over nepotism in public appointments and petty graft raise questions about the integrity of some government appointments.

Kiribati engages in international cooperation and is a party to several international treaties, including the UN

Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the UN Convention against Corruption. However, the country has not ratified the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, despite concerns over overfishing. Kiribati is a member of INTERPOL and participates in intelligence sharing. Law enforcement collaborates with international agencies, such as the US Coast Guard, Australian Federal Police and China, to combat IUU fishing, drug trafficking and cybercrime. The country's Financial Crime Unit is involved in regional discussions on financial crime, and Kiribati is a signatory to the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons, and Related Transnational Crime. However, Kiribati has no formal bilateral agreement on drug trafficking and has not ratified the UN Firearms Protocol.

National laws address organized crime through the Measures to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime Act, with additional legislation covering fisheries, financial crimes and cybercrimes. Government has attempted to curb financial and cyber-dependent crimes through targeted legislation, but weak detection and enforcement mechanisms have rendered these efforts largely ineffective. There is a need to update cybercrime laws in particular and to introduce more specific regulations on illegal sand, gravel and aggregate mining, which evidence suggests could become a significant criminal market. Human trafficking

laws also appear inadequate, as they define trafficking exclusively as a transnational offence, preventing the prosecution of domestic cases, while the enforcement of financial and cybercrimes legislation is weak.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Kiribati does not have specialized judicial units for prosecuting organized crime. No reported evidence suggests that the judiciary has failed to pass effective judgments in cases brought before the courts. However, in recent years, international organizations have noted significant case backlogs. The prison system consists of four facilities, three for men and one for women. Prison conditions are generally considered adequate, but a concern is the mixing of convicted criminals, pretrial detainees and juvenile offenders in shared accommodation.

Law enforcement includes a transnational crime unit within the Pacific Transnational Crime Network, a financial intelligence unit and a cybercrime unit. However, law enforcement remains understaffed, and enforcement of human trafficking is limited by the lack of measures for identifying victims. Kiribati receives law enforcement support from international partners, including China, Australia and the US. The country is also involved in the Pacific Policing Initiative, which aims to enhance regional policing cooperation, although the prioritization of strategic interests over local needs is a concern.

Kiribati's territorial integrity is difficult to maintain due to its vast EEZ and limited enforcement resources. The Police Maritime Unit has increased its personnel but lacks the infrastructure to monitor the country's borders effectively, allowing drug trafficking through its waters without necessarily reaching the mainland.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Kiribati's legal framework criminalizes money laundering, but no publicly recorded prosecutions have occurred. The Financial Intelligence Unit coordinates anti-money laundering (AML) efforts across government departments. In 2023, Kiribati held its first Public-Private Sector Dialogue Forum to strengthen AML mechanisms. However, the country is not a member of the Financial Action Task Force, due to the financial and legal burdens associated with adherence to its guidelines.

Kiribati has a relatively open economic environment with few restrictions on business entry. Property rights are upheld through individual and kinship-based systems. Although the construction sector increasingly relies on unregulated sand and gravel, no evidence suggests that organized crime controls specific industries. Nevertheless, the country's high dependency on foreign aid may influence its economic policies.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Victim and witness support services are limited in Kiribati. The government does not operate shelters for victims of trafficking or sexual exploitation, but the Kiribati Women and Children Support Centre provides assistance to victims of violence, including shelter and counselling. Despite efforts in recent years to expand victim services beyond urban centres, support remains largely concentrated in the capital, limiting accessibility for those in remote areas.

Similarly, Kiribati lacks structured prevention initiatives targeting organized crime. In 2022, financial constraints led to the government lifting the ban on commercial fishing in the Phoenix Islands, a key prevention measure against illegal fishing, which increases the risks of overfishing. Despite some enforcement efforts, including routine inspections, the country lacks broader preventive strategies that target counterfeit goods.

Non-state actors, including the media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), play a significant role in Kiribati's social landscape, although challenges persist. The country's Constitution protects freedom of expression, and media outlets operate without direct government interference. However, media freedom has declined, with the only privately owned newspaper closing in early 2024 due to financial difficulties. Churches and NGOs remain active in advocacy and information dissemination. No attacks on journalists or activists have been reported, but self-censorship and economic insecurity restrict press freedom. The Kiribati Association of NGOs coordinates local NGO activities, but evidence of civil society engagement in addressing organized crime is limited.

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.