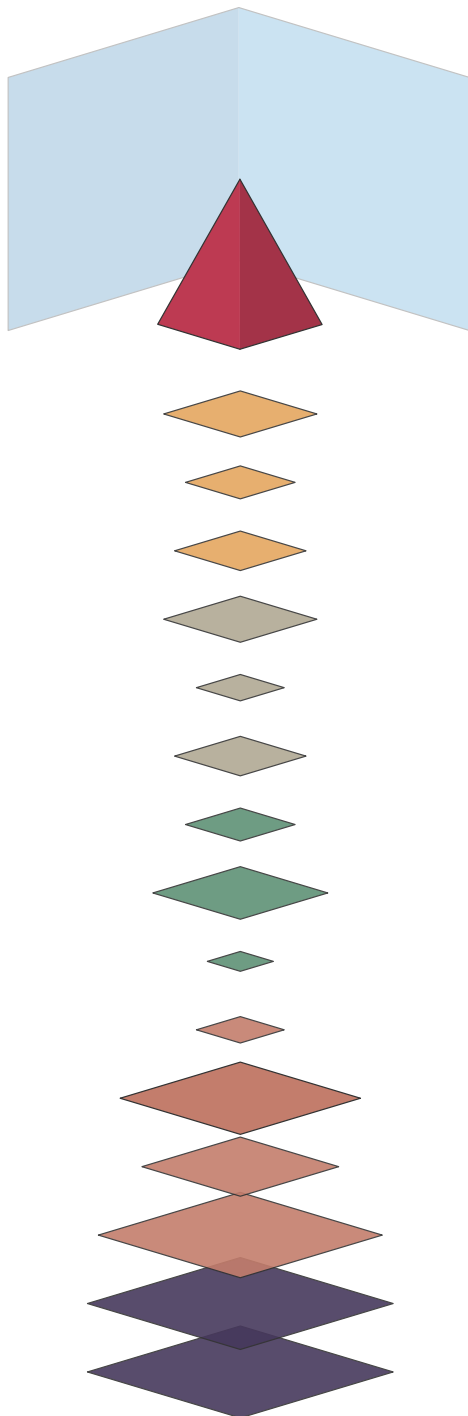


NEW ZEALAND



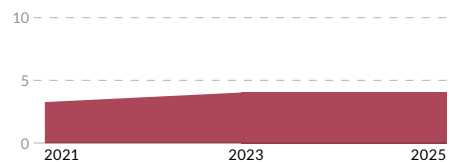
4.13 $\nearrow 0.05$

CRIMINALITY SCORE

147th of 193 countries $\nearrow 2$

3rd of 14 Oceanian countries $\nearrow 1$

1st of 2 Australia and New Zealand countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS

3.87 $\nearrow 0.10$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	3.50	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	2.50	$\searrow 1.00$
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	3.00	$\searrow 1.00$
ARMS TRAFFICKING	3.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	2.00	0.00
ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	3.00	$\nearrow 1.00$
FLORA CRIMES	2.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
FAUNA CRIMES	4.00	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	1.50	0.00
HEROIN TRADE	2.00	$\searrow 0.50$
COCAINE TRADE	5.50	$\nearrow 1.00$
CANNABIS TRADE	4.50	$\searrow 0.50$
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	6.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	7.00	$\nearrow 1.00$
FINANCIAL CRIMES	7.00	0.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS

4.40 0.00

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	4.00	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	2.00	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	5.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	5.00	$\searrow 1.00$



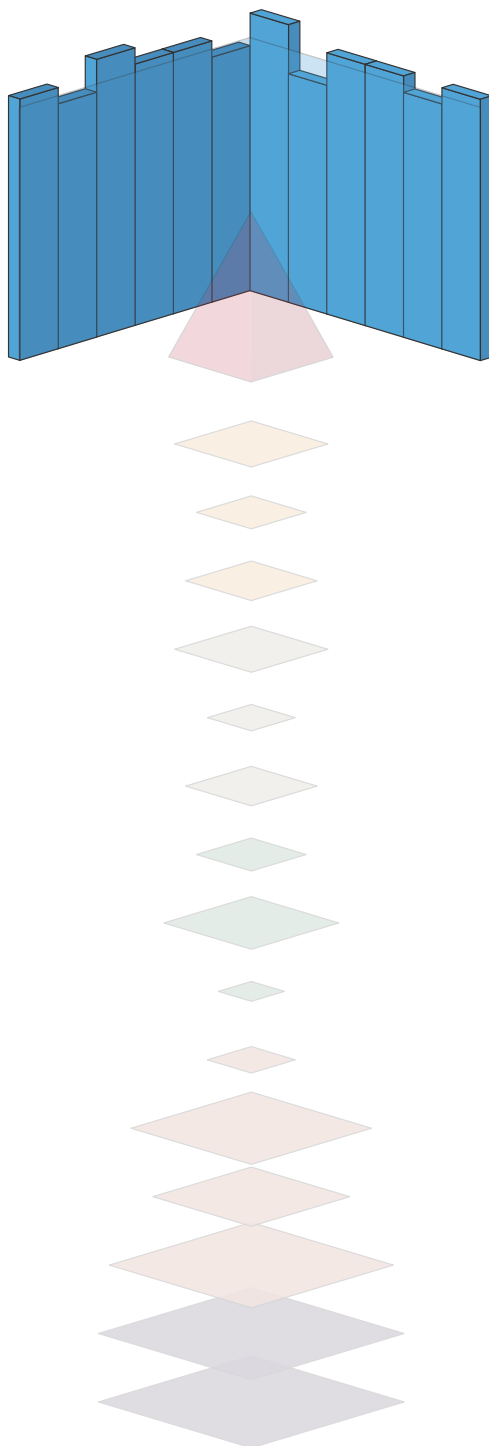
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Funded by
the European Union

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NEW ZEALAND

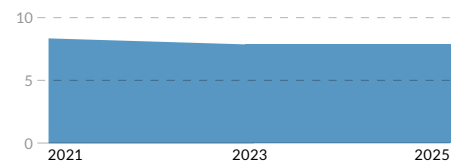


7.88_{0.00} **RESILIENCE SCORE**

9th of 193 countries ↘1

1st of 14 Oceanian countries -

1st of 2 Australia and New Zealand countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE **8.00** _{0.00}

GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY **7.50** _{↗0.50}

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION **8.50** _{0.00}

NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS **8.00** _{0.00}

JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION **8.00** _{↗0.50}

LAW ENFORCEMENT **7.50** _{0.00}

TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY **8.50** _{0.00}

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING **7.00** _{↗0.50}

ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY **8.00** _{0.00}

VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT **8.00** _{0.00}

PREVENTION **7.50** _{0.00}

NON-STATE ACTORS **8.00** _{↗0.50}



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

New Zealand is a destination country for human trafficking. Victims from South and East Asia, the Pacific Islands and Latin America are recruited under deceptive pretences and forced to work in agriculture, construction, hospitality, transport and domestic service. Traffickers use social media platforms to advertise fraudulent job opportunities and recruit vulnerable people who are then exploited. Unregulated immigration brokers, from both New Zealand and the source countries, facilitate trafficking through coercion, debt bondage and threats of deportation. Some victims are lured with promises of legitimate employment and then coerced into commercial sex work to repay migration costs. Although comprehensive data is lacking, anecdotal reports suggest that forced and child marriage occurs in New Zealand, particularly within communities that adhere to strict social customs. Family members, intimate partners and local gang affiliates have been implicated in trafficking activities and, in some cases, control victims by manipulating drug dependencies. Certain private-sector entities, including companies and vessels engaged in illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, have also been linked to human trafficking for labour exploitation.

Human smuggling activities in New Zealand are relatively limited but often overlap with trafficking operations. Smugglers use digital platforms, encrypted messaging services and social media groups to facilitate irregular migration. Unregulated migrant brokers, particularly from China, India and the Philippines, prey on workers seeking better economic opportunities. Maritime smuggling is rare due to New Zealand's geographic isolation and strong border controls, although reports suggest some vessels engaged in IUU fishing may be used for smuggling.

Limited data is available on organized extortion and protection racketeering in New Zealand. Some gang-related extortion cases may occur but are infrequently reported, making it difficult to assess the extent of these activities.

TRADE

Gangs drive the illicit firearms market in New Zealand, with local criminal networks engaged in trafficking and distribution. The rising availability of firearms, coupled with increased gang membership and crime rates, has contributed to heightened violence. Although precise data on the scale of illicit arms trade is lacking, evidence points to four primary procurement methods: diversion through 'straw purchases' (i.e., buying on behalf of someone who is prohibited from

owning weapons), theft from legal owners, illicit importation and the increasing use of 3D-printed and modified firearms. The connection between arms trafficking and drug trade is well established, as indebted drug users are often coerced into facilitating firearm transactions, selling drugs or engaging in criminal activities to sustain their addiction.

The counterfeit goods market in New Zealand remains relatively small, with no widespread evidence of organized criminal involvement. However, counterfeit clothing, designer accessories and high-end goods are available through online marketplaces.

The illicit trade in excise goods, particularly tobacco, is expanding, with organized crime groups increasingly involved in smuggling and distribution. Outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMCGs) and transnational criminal networks smuggle large quantities of cigarettes and loose tobacco, primarily from South East Asia, into the country. Smuggling methods have evolved, with shipments hidden in construction materials and sea cargo rather than small postal packages. Auckland has become a distribution node for illicit tobacco, which is sold through retail shops, online platforms and encrypted messaging apps. Law enforcement agencies have intensified operations targeting smuggling networks, but the high cost of legal tobacco continues to fuel demand for illicit alternatives.

ENVIRONMENT

The main flora crimes in New Zealand are illegal logging and illicit timber trade. The illegal harvesting of native tree species, such as rimu, has caused serious environmental damage in some areas. Increased timber imports have raised concerns about New Zealand becoming a conduit for illicit timber, despite a robust legal framework regulating timber trade. The government has introduced even stricter regulations, but the recent policy shift in favour of fast-track infrastructure approvals has raised fears of increased environmental exploitation.

Illegal wildlife trafficking and IUU fishing are the main fauna crimes in New Zealand. The country's unique biodiversity makes it a target for smuggling wildlife, such as jewelled geckos and parrots, to international markets. Postal shipments are a common method used for smuggling, with China, Vietnam and Singapore identified as major destinations. Despite a decline in some areas, IUU fishing remains a persistent issue. Black-market seafood, particularly crayfish and abalone, continues to be trafficked, with evidence suggesting links to money laundering and broader organized crime networks.

Little data is available on non-renewable resource crimes in New Zealand, but concerns have been raised about the

potential impact of policy changes that could facilitate increased mining activities. A recent case involving illegal gold mining in Central Otago highlighted risks related to regulatory oversight and illicit trade.

DRUGS

In New Zealand, cannabis is the most widely used illicit drug, with the market supplied by both domestic cultivation and international trafficking. Local gangs control much of the trade, operating through traditional street markets and online platforms. The legalization of medicinal cannabis has influenced market dynamics, but barriers remain for consumers transitioning to legal sources. Although law enforcement has dismantled large-scale cannabis operations, particularly those linked to Vietnamese criminal syndicates, the illicit market remains strong.

One of New Zealand's most entrenched criminal markets is the synthetic drug trade, particularly methamphetamine, which is dominated by OMCGs, Asian syndicates and deported Australian gang members who coordinate large-scale imports from Mexico, China and South East Asia. Wastewater testing reveals rising consumption and expansion of methamphetamine into new regions. The market for synthetic opioids and benzodiazepines has also grown, with an increase in illegally manufactured pills. Despite substantial drug seizures by authorities, synthetic drug distribution remains a key driver of violent crime and money laundering.

The substantial rise in cocaine consumption and border seizures has established New Zealand as one of the emerging global lucrative cocaine markets, alongside Australia. Although New Zealand has tighter controls and fewer access points through ports or airports, its proximity to Australia exposes it to potential criminal expansion. The upsurge in the cocaine market in New Zealand is mainly fuelled by rising global production and the increased involvement of Mexican cartels. Cocaine seizures have reached record levels, with authorities intercepting large shipments from Latin America. Trafficking routes for cocaine have developed between Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and other countries that target Australia and New Zealand as destination markets. Cartels have employed various strategies to evade authorities. OMCGs and local drug networks facilitate distribution, acting as intermediaries for transnational groups.

New Zealand's heroin market is limited, with low levels of consumption and trafficking, although specific information on heroin-related activities is scarce.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crimes in New Zealand are escalating, with increased ransomware attacks and data breaches. Financial losses from cyberattacks on large businesses reach millions annually. Malicious state-backed actors

and financially motivated cybercriminals actively target businesses and individuals, while cybercrime-as-a-service models have enabled lower-tier criminals to engage in sophisticated schemes.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crime in New Zealand includes cyber-enabled fraud, phishing and tax evasion. There has been a proliferation of various types of financial scams, including investment fraud, cyber-related tax fraud, marketplace scams, unauthorized online purchases, phishing attacks, job scams and romance fraud. Estimates suggest that one in 10 adults falls victim to fraud or deception. In addition, the rise of digital banking has allowed criminals to exploit gaps in regulatory oversight. Fraud schemes, particularly investment scams and tax evasion, have become increasingly sophisticated and often involve transnational networks. Exacerbating the challenges posed by financial crimes is the rapid growth of e-commerce and digital banking, combined with economic vulnerabilities and under-reporting.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

New Zealand does not appear to be highly vulnerable to mafia-style groups. The New Zealand chapters of OMCGs may have extensive influence, but most do not have the hierarchical leadership structures typically associated with mafia-style organizations. The exceptions are the Head Hunters OMCG and the Mongrel Mob, which have hierarchical structures and complex, extensive business operations. In addition, the increasing sophistication of local criminal networks and their growing affiliations with transnational organized crime groups could lead to more structured organizations emerging in the future.

For now, loosely structured but increasingly sophisticated criminal networks dominate New Zealand's organized crime landscape. They are involved in drug trafficking, financial crimes, wildlife trafficking, human trafficking and firearms smuggling. Since 2017, there has been a noticeable rise in violent incidents linked to criminal networks, including intimidation, assaults and firearms-related violence. Feuds and territorial disputes over the control of illicit markets have become more frequent, and criminal activities are no longer concentrated in major cities and northern coastal areas. Operations have expanded to southern regions, extending even to Pacific Island countries, including Fiji and the Cook Islands. The most prominent groups operating in New Zealand are chapters of certain OMCGs, such as the Comancheros, the Mongols, the Hells Angels and the Highway 61. The country's criminal landscape also includes non-biker gangs, such as the King Cobras, Māori gangs and smaller youth gangs of Pacific descent, that maintain strong ties with international criminal organizations, particularly Asian syndicates, Latin American and Mexican cartels, and North American crime factions. Recent law enforcement

reports indicate that the majority of gang members in New Zealand are of Māori descent, highlighting socio-economic factors that drive gang recruitment and participation. As drug profits increase, these networks are increasingly collaborating with foreign organized crime groups, particularly in money laundering and illicit financial services. New Zealand's criminal networks have also been bolstered by the deportation of people under Australia's '501' policy, which has led to an influx of gang-affiliated offenders returning to the country. Official data suggests that membership of criminal networks is rising, with approximately 0.25% of the population affiliated with a criminal group.

There is no evidence of systemic state-embedded actors being involved in organized crime in New Zealand. Isolated incidents of organized crime groups attempting to infiltrate the police have been reported but do not indicate widespread corruption within law enforcement or border control agencies. However, concerns have been raised about gangs being embedded within certain communities and potentially influencing local governance and political discourse. Despite such concerns, there is no indication that state actors are actively facilitating or protecting organized criminal activities in the country.

Foreign actors are prominent in New Zealand's organized crime landscape, especially linked to drug trafficking, cybercrime and human trafficking. Asian syndicates, particularly those with ties to Chinese Triads, play an important role in methamphetamine trafficking and often

collaborate with Latin American and Mexican cartels. These networks operate alongside local criminal groups to facilitate drug shipments into New Zealand. Foreign actors are also heavily involved in human trafficking and illicit labour recruitment. Unregulated brokers from China, the Philippines and India have been implicated in smuggling and trafficking operations, often using social media to lure victims with fraudulent job offers before subjecting them to forced labour or commercial sexual exploitation. Cyber-dependent crimes targeting New Zealand's infrastructure have also been linked to foreign state-sponsored actors, primarily from China and Russia. New Zealand has seen an increase in foreign investment scams and fraudulent financial schemes linked to international companies. As foreign actors continue to exert considerable influence over the criminal economy, New Zealand will need to enhance regulatory oversight and international cooperation to combat transnational threats.

To launder illicit proceeds, criminal actors in New Zealand use various economic sectors, in particular the real estate market, financial institutions and commercial investment services. Shell companies implicated in international tax offences, money laundering and financial fraud have exploited New Zealand's financial system. Gaps also remain in legal services and financial advisory practices, where professionals may inadvertently, or knowingly in some cases, assist criminal actors in maintaining financial secrecy.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

New Zealand has a robust democratic system characterized by free and fair elections, strong civil liberties and well-functioning political institutions. The country consistently ranks highly in global governance indicators, reflecting its commitment to political stability, accountability and transparency. Low levels of corruption are maintained through strict institutional oversight and law enforcement mechanisms. However, concerns persist over discrimination against Māori and other minority populations, as well as foreign influence in politics and the education sector. In addition, challenges in government formation and recent reductions in government spending may affect efforts to combat organized crime effectively. Despite these concerns, the government continues to prioritize countering transnational organized crime through comprehensive strategies and policy frameworks.

Transparency and accountability in New Zealand's governance are reinforced by its legal framework, which mandates public access to parliamentary records, policies and reports. Budgetary processes are conducted openly, and elected officials are required to disclose financial interests. The country has ratified key international anti-corruption conventions, ensuring strong institutional mechanisms to prevent corruption. Nevertheless, concerns over the relationship between lobbying groups and government decision-makers persist, particularly regarding influencing policy in sensitive sectors such as tobacco regulation. Furthermore, while New Zealand is seen as having low corruption, recent government changes raise questions about its current priorities. Spending measures are unclear and may be more about public messaging than substantive reform.

New Zealand actively participates in international treaties and conventions addressing transnational organized crime. It is a signatory to major agreements, including the UN

Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and the UN Convention Against Corruption. The country collaborates with key international partners, such as Australia, the Pacific Island nations and the Five Eyes Intelligence Oversight and Review Council. New Zealand also plays a leading role in regional security frameworks, including the Pacific Transnational Crime Network, which strengthens law enforcement cooperation across the Pacific.

The country has a well-developed legal framework to combat organized crime, including legislation on arms trafficking, human trafficking, environmental crimes and cybercrime. Although these legislative measures enhance law enforcement capabilities against criminal organizations, concerns have been raised regarding the implementation of some laws, leading to regulatory loopholes and compliance challenges.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

New Zealand's judiciary is widely regarded as independent and effective, with a low risk of corruption. Courts handle a high caseload, and efforts are made to enhance judicial efficiency through increased funding and resources. New Zealand prisons comply with international standards for detention facilities, ensuring fair, safe, secure and humane treatment of all prisoners. However, the pretrial detention system is of concern, as delays in resolving cases have resulted in prolonged detentions, and young offenders who are placed in mainstream prison environments may be at risk of adopting criminal behaviours upon release. Despite these challenges, the judiciary upholds fair trial standards and ensures accountability through an independent oversight mechanism.

Law enforcement agencies in New Zealand are well-equipped to address organized crime, with specialized units dedicated to tackling financial crime, cybercrime and gang-related activities. The National Organized Crime Group and the Financial Crime Group work to dismantle criminal networks and seize illicit proceeds. However, recent budget cuts have limited law enforcement's capacity to focus on transnational organized crime.

New Zealand's strategic location in the Pacific makes it a potential target for organized crime groups seeking to exploit its ports and borders. However, the country has robust border security measures, including advanced screening technologies and collaborative intelligence-sharing mechanisms. Established in 2021, the Border Executive Board coordinates inter-agency responses to border security threats. Nevertheless, while New Zealand's geographic isolation offers some protection against illicit trafficking, vulnerabilities remain, particularly in the maritime sector, where limited resources hinder enforcement efforts against IUU fishing.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

New Zealand has a well-developed anti-money laundering (AML) framework, with dedicated financial crime units that monitor suspicious transactions. The Financial Intelligence Unit and the Asset Recovery Units actively investigate money-laundering activities and facilitate asset seizures. In 2024, New Zealand's AML framework saw significant developments, including the release of a new National Risk Assessment and updates to class exemptions. The country has improved its compliance with international AML standards, but enforcement gaps remain, particularly the regulation of shell companies and professional services that may facilitate illicit financial flows. In addition, online gambling is growing and could be used as a money-laundering channel.

New Zealand is committed to facilitating productive, sustainable and inclusive investments. However, the country's open and transparent economy is attractive to both legitimate investors and criminal organizations seeking to exploit regulatory loopholes. Financial oversight has been strengthened in response to past financial scandals, but achieving full transparency in corporate ownership structures remains a challenge. The government has pledged to introduce a public beneficial ownership registry to improve accountability in financial transactions. It has also taken steps to regulate retail crime, with law enforcement agencies providing protective measures for businesses targeted by organized crime groups.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

New Zealand supports victims of organized crime and has dedicated funding for victim assistance programmes. The Victim Assistance Scheme provides financial support to people affected by serious crimes, including trafficking survivors and victims of violent offences. However, gaps remain in service provision, especially meeting the needs of trafficking victims, with non-government organizations (NGOs) reporting challenges in securing visas for trafficking victims and accessing adequate resources for rehabilitation and reintegration. Minimizing harm from alcohol and drug use and promoting and protecting health and wellbeing are key goals in the country's National Drug Policy.

New Zealand has put in place prevention strategies to combat transnational organized crime and boost resilience. These initiatives integrate social and economic interventions with targeted enforcement measures to address the root causes of organized crime. Community policing strategies have also been implemented to enhance engagement with local populations and reduce crime rates. While these programmes demonstrate a proactive approach to crime prevention, funding limitations could affect their long-term sustainability.

New Zealand has a strong independent civil society sector, with NGOs actively engaged in combatting human trafficking, financial crime and cybercrime. However, the media landscape has faced increasing challenges, including the closing of several news outlets in 2024, raising concerns about reduced scrutiny of government and democratic engagement. Despite maintaining a high degree of press freedom, journalists face online harassment, while the consolidation of media ownership has limited diversity in reporting.

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.