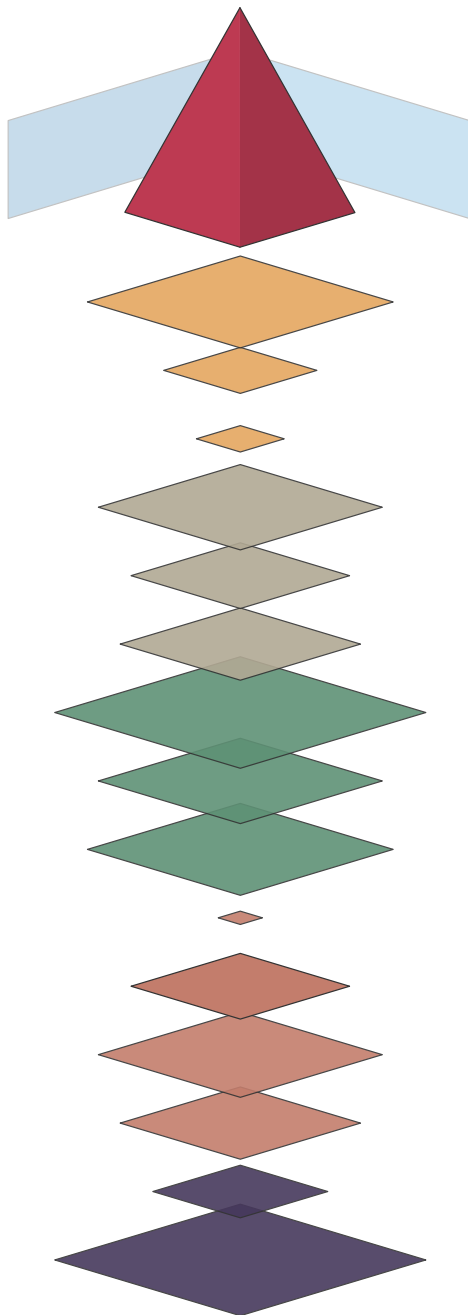




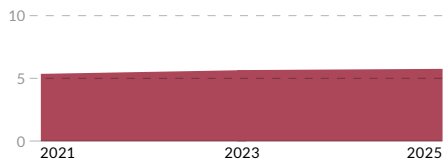
PAPUA NEW GUINEA



5.78 $\nearrow 0.06$

CRIMINALITY SCORE

65th of 193 countries $\searrow 2$
1st of 14 Oceanian countries -
1st of 4 Melanesian countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS

5.47 $\nearrow 0.14$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	7.00	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	3.50	$\searrow 0.50$
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	2.00	0.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	6.50	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	5.00	$\searrow 0.50$
ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	5.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
FLORA CRIMES	8.50	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	6.50	$\nearrow 1.50$
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	7.00	0.00
HEROIN TRADE	1.00	0.00
COCAINE TRADE	5.00	$\nearrow 1.00$
CANNABIS TRADE	6.50	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	5.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	4.00	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	8.50	$\searrow 0.50$



CRIMINAL ACTORS

6.10 0.00

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	8.00	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	8.50	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	6.50	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	6.50	0.00



This project was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State.

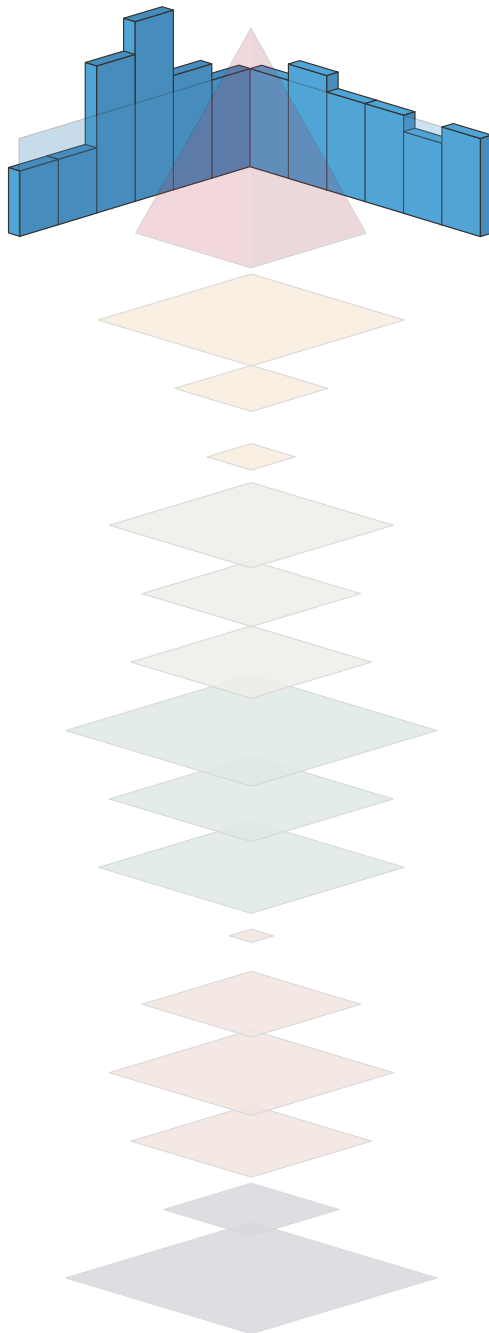


Funded by the European Union

ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.



PAPUA NEW GUINEA



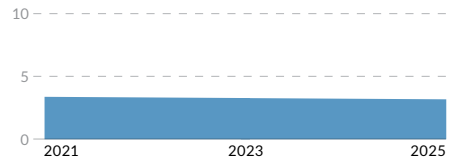
3.21 $\downarrow 0.08$

RESILIENCE SCORE

159th of 193 countries $\downarrow 4$

14th of 14 Oceanian countries -

4th of 4 Melanesian countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	2.00	$\downarrow 0.50$
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	2.00	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	4.50	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	5.50	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	3.50	$\downarrow 1.00$
LAW ENFORCEMENT	3.00	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	3.00	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	3.50	$\uparrow 0.50$
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	3.00	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	3.00	$\downarrow 0.50$
PREVENTION	2.50	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	3.00	$\uparrow 0.50$



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

In Papua New Guinea, human trafficking affects both local and foreign victims, but most cases go unreported. The country is a destination and transit point for trafficked people who are subjected to forced labour, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, child labour and domestic servitude. Men from China, Malaysia, Burma, Cambodia and Vietnam are forced to work in logging and mining camps, plantations and fishing vessels, while women and children from Malaysia, Thailand, China and the Philippines are trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation or the production of pornographic materials, and forced to work in the tourism and entertainment industries, and to beg or work as street vendors. Domestic trafficking also occurs, particularly through arranged marriages and informal adoptions, which sometimes result in domestic servitude and sex trafficking. However, forced child labour is distinct from traditional labour practices in rural Papua New Guinea, where farming is a primary livelihood and labour is distributed among all family members, including children. National and foreign criminal groups facilitate human trafficking. They include foreign companies (mostly Malaysian and Chinese), corrupt government officials and individual traffickers who exploit weak border controls, poor governance and cultural practices intertwined with poverty.

Like other Pacific islands, Papua New Guinea is a transit point for nationals from South East Asia, South Asia and East Asia en route to Australia, New Zealand and the US. Smuggling into the country itself is not common. While no dedicated smuggling networks have been identified, criminal actors often operate under the guise of legal recruitment or migration agencies. According to law enforcement agencies in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu, locals and foreign nationals are increasingly collaborating in smuggling activities. Papua New Guinea's porous maritime borders and extensive land border with Indonesia are attractive to smugglers, although the rough terrain also acts as a barrier.

There is little evidence of widespread extortion and protection racketeering in Papua New Guinea. There are sporadic reports of criminally motivated kidnappings in remote areas and informal extortion practices, which are often linked to cultural traditions of 'payback'. These practices may not be formally structured but at times overlap with criminal activities, particularly in the mining sector.

TRADE

Arms trafficking is a significant issue and contributes to national security concerns and violence. Illicit firearms enter Papua New Guinea primarily through Indonesia and maritime routes from Australia, although no significant seizures of Australian-origin weapons have been reported recently. Other sources of illicit arms include diverted police and military stockpiles, weapons obtained from abandoned war-era stockpiles and homemade firearms. Tribal conflicts, criminal violence and political competition drive the demand for illicit arms. The illicit arms markets is concentrated in the Highlands region and, despite efforts to curb it, persists due to the historical role played by political figures, business elites and state-embedded actors in facilitating the trade.

The trade in counterfeit goods affects Papua New Guinea's economy and public health. Counterfeit products, primarily sourced from China, include electronics, pharmaceuticals, clothing and food items. The sale of counterfeit cultural products, such as fake traditional Papua New Guinea textiles, has further economic and social implications. Despite no confirmed evidence of organized crime involvement in this market, in some instances, foreign-owned businesses have been associated with illicit practices, such as unauthorized imports of counterfeit products and pharmaceuticals, piracy and related activities.

The illicit trade of excisable goods, particularly tobacco and alcohol, is a challenge in Papua New Guinea, which loses significant revenue due to smuggling – one in three cigarettes in the country is reportedly illicit. Both small-scale and large transnational networks use maritime routes from South East Asia to smuggle excisable goods, which are shipped through multiple transit ports and enabled by corrupt customs enforcement.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora crimes, particularly illegal logging, are a major concern in Papua New Guinea, which is one of the top tropical timber exporters in the world – it is estimated that over 70% of timber exported is sourced illegally. Logging companies, primarily from Malaysia and China, obtain concessions through corrupt practices. Timber is primarily destined for China, South Korea and Japan, with some reaching the EU and the US. Despite international commitments to curb illegal logging, enforcement remains weak, and state-embedded actors continue to benefit from the trade. In addition, Papua New Guinea's palm oil industry has been linked to environmental crimes and corruption.

Fauna crimes are also prevalent in Papua New Guinea and include illegal wildlife trade and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Many of the illicit wildlife

products, which include birds, reptiles and marine species, are smuggled to Asian markets. Foreign vessels exploit weak monitoring and enforcement to engage in IUU fishing within Papua New Guinea's waters. Large-scale industrial fishing fleets operate at night using banned techniques and ignoring regulatory quotas, while transnational organized crime networks smuggle illegally caught fish and marine products across borders. In addition, 'blue boats', which are small wooden vessels primarily from South East Asia, especially Vietnam, often conduct unauthorized fishing activities with little oversight.

In Papua New Guinea, non-renewable resource crimes include illegal mining, gold smuggling and illicit mercury imports. Large-scale mining operations are mostly controlled by foreign firms and have been linked to corruption, environmental degradation and social unrest, while small-scale and alluvial gold mining is widespread and often conducted informally. Large amounts of gold are reportedly smuggled out of the country to Asian markets, with recent reports indicating that both local and foreign actors are involved in illicit gold smuggling networks. Another environmental concern is sand mining, which is driven by loose networks of local extractors operating informally.

DRUGS

In Papua New Guinea, the most widely produced and consumed illicit drug is cannabis, which is cultivated in the Highlands and coastal regions and trafficked internationally. While cannabis production remains largely domestic, loose local networks facilitate its trade, sometimes in exchange for firearms. Major transit points for cannabis smuggling include Lae and Vanimo, with the latter serving as a gateway for smuggling into Indonesia.

The synthetic drug trade is growing. Papua New Guinea is both a transit and emerging production site for methamphetamine. Intelligence reports indicate the presence of methamphetamine laboratories in key urban areas, suggesting increasing domestic production. Transnational crime syndicates, including Asian criminal networks, have reportedly infiltrated the country's drug markets and traffic methamphetamine to Australia.

Papua New Guinea continues to be a transit point for cocaine destined for Australia and New Zealand, but little is known about the organizations involved, Australian organized crime groups and transnational syndicates reportedly use the country as a trafficking hub, smuggling cocaine through maritime and air routes, using yachts and small aircraft. Although Papua New Guinea's role in the cocaine trade remains secondary, its strategic location makes it an attractive transit point for traffickers. The heroin trade is virtually absent with no market for the drug in Papua New Guinea.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crimes remain relatively limited but are expected to grow, as access to the internet increased. There have been reports of ransomware attacks targeting government institutions and businesses, disrupting essential services. However, although opportunistic attacks are on the rise, there is no evidence of structured cybercrime groups operating within Papua New Guinea.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

In Papua New Guinea, financial crimes are pervasive, driven by corruption, misappropriation of public funds and fraud schemes, such as Ponzi operations. Government funds are frequently misused, with payments funnelled through the banking sector and redirected towards real estate acquisitions, high-value assets, cash distributions or offshore transfers, primarily to Australia. Despite its considerable wealth potential, Papua New Guinea's growth is hindered by the mismanagement of state resources and pervasive corruption. Corrupt state-embedded actors continue to be involved in fraudulent activities. In addition, recent cases indicate a growing presence of foreign actors engaged in illicit financial activities within the country.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Information is scarce on the nature and organization of criminal groups in the Pacific Islands, including Papua New Guinea, but criminal activity in the country does not exhibit the hierarchical structure, leadership or operational sophistication typically associated with mafia-style organizations. However, criminal networks known as raskol dominate Papua New Guinea's crime landscape. Four major gangs (Bomai, Koboni, Mafia and Brigade) and numerous smaller groups engage primarily in petty crimes but are also involved in drug trafficking and arms smuggling. They operate along highways in coastal and island provinces, and in urban centres such as Port Moresby and Lae. Traditionally involved in localized criminal activities, some of these networks have expanded into transnational operations, including collaborating with Asian Triads to traffic drugs from Papua New Guinea to Australia, New Zealand, the US and Canada. Tribal violence, particularly in the Highlands region, occurs as a result of inter-clan conflicts, which criminal groups exploit, using the violence for territorial control and economic gain. Tribal leaders reportedly sometimes exchange the labour of exploited women and girls for firearms, political alliances or dispute resolutions. Armed gangs are also increasingly engaged in maritime piracy, using high-powered boats to target civilians travelling in small vessels, ferries and private yachts along Papua New Guinea's extensive coastline and river networks.

Corruption is deeply entrenched in Papua New Guinea's state institutions, with government actors frequently implicated in organized crime. The police force is considered

the most corrupt public agency, engaging in drug smuggling, gunrunning and land theft. Reports highlight a culture of police misconduct and a widespread practice of accepting bribes in exchange for ignoring human trafficking cases. Some officials have also been accused of accepting bribes to allow irregular migrants into the country or ignoring forced labour and sexual exploitation cases. The state-embedded corruption heavily affects the forestry and fishing sectors, with government officials being accused of accepting bribes to issue illegal logging permits, ignoring environmental regulations and enabling exploitative labour practices. Similarly, illegal fishing operations in Papua New Guinea's waters are frequently linked to networks involving corrupt politicians, fishing companies and shell corporations. High-level officials have also been implicated in the drug trade, with growing evidence of their involvement in facilitating trafficking routes and protecting criminal actors from prosecution.

Foreign actors continue to influence Papua New Guinea's criminal markets. The Asian business community is involved in illicit activities ranging from human smuggling to money laundering, counterfeit goods trade and environmental crimes. Chinese businesses are frequently associated with the importation of counterfeit pharmaceuticals, clothing and electronic goods, while Asian multinational

corporations have been implicated in bribery, tax evasion and illegal resource extraction. Malaysian and Chinese companies dominate Papua New Guinea's logging sector, often violating national forestry regulations despite holding legal concessions. Similarly, foreign vessels, particularly from South East Asia and including Vietnamese 'blue boats', conduct large-scale IUU fishing operations in Papua New Guinea's waters, depleting marine resources. Foreign crime syndicates play a dominant role in organized crime activity, with Asian Triads reportedly collaborating with local criminal gangs to traffic drugs to Australia, New Zealand, the US and Canada. Reports also suggest that some Bangladeshi and Pakistani people with strong political connections have entered Papua New Guinea illegally for commercial purposes, sometimes securing land rights through arranged marriages with local women.

Private-sector actors, particularly in Papua New Guinea's logging industry, frequently collaborate with criminal organizations to launder illicit proceeds. Financial institutions, accountants and legal professionals have been implicated in money laundering and handling the profits derived from illegal resource extraction. Banks in Papua New Guinea have been directly linked to criminal activities, including providing financial services to entities engaged in illicit trade.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Papua New Guinea is politically unstable and characterized by weak party allegiances, corruption and violence. The country has a long history of coalition governments, which often lack stability due to shifting political allegiances – only two governments have served full terms since the country gained independence in 1975. In 2024, competition to replace the prime minister after an 18-month grace period contributed to political uncertainty. Governance is hindered by the use of government resources to secure political support and little accountability or oversight regarding the allocation of public funds.

Corruption affects multiple sectors. Although Papua New Guinea has legal frameworks in place to combat corruption and is a signatory to the UN Convention against Corruption, enforcement is weak. Institutions, such as the Ombudsman Commission, the Independent Commission Against Corruption and various anti-corruption units, lack the necessary resources and funding to operate effectively. Transparency in government operations is limited, and the country does not have an access-to-information law to ensure public oversight. Recent allegations of misconduct highlighted ongoing challenges in addressing corruption

and raised concerns about internal conflicts within the oversight authorities and their capacity to effectively combat corruption, which could affect credibility and future operations.

Internationally, Papua New Guinea maintains close ties with Australia, New Zealand and other Pacific nations, and relies on foreign aid for governance and security. The country has extradition agreements with select nations but lacks treaties with countries that are heavily involved in local organized crime markets. Although not a signatory to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Papua New Guinea has ratified treaties related to corruption, wildlife protection and narcotics control. Recent security cooperation agreements, including a bilateral security pact with Australia, aim to strengthen the country's law enforcement capabilities.

Legislation addressing organized crime is limited and outdated, with more than 370 laws still in effect that predate contemporary crime dynamics. While some legislative progress has been made, such as the introduction of stricter firearm laws and new anti-terrorism measures, enforcement remains inadequate. Many key laws, including

those regulating human trafficking and illicit substances, are not being implemented properly and are ineffective in combating organized crime.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Papua New Guinea's judicial system is under significant strain and inadequately resourced, resulting in severe delays in processing cases and lengthy pretrial detentions. The backlog of cases that extends for years is due to a shortage of judges and magistrates, coupled with outdated procedures. The country's detention system is similarly under-resourced, with prisons that are overcrowded, have poor sanitation and experience frequent escape attempts. Instances of abuse within detention facilities, including reported mistreatment of female prisoners, highlight the weak oversight within the system. As higher courts struggle to manage caseloads, village courts (not the formal judicial system) often handle tribal disputes.

Law enforcement is very under-resourced, with the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary suffering from a shortage of personnel and training. Corruption within the police force is widespread, and officers are frequently implicated in organized criminal activities, including drug trafficking and illegal arms sales. Public trust in law enforcement is low, and reports of excessive use of force, extrajudicial killings and bribery have undermined police legitimacy. In recent years, concerns over police discipline and accountability led to renewed calls for reform within the force. Meanwhile, the country is having discussions on potential policing agreements and security assistance with external actors, including Australia and China.

Territorial integrity remains a major challenge due to porous land and maritime borders that make Papua New Guinea a key transit point for illicit commodities. The country has received international assistance for border security, but arms, drugs and people continue to be smuggled across its border with Indonesia, while IUU fishing and wildlife trafficking persist. Cybersecurity vulnerabilities further complicate law enforcement efforts, with outdated digital infrastructure exposing Papua New Guinea to cyber threats.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Money laundering is a concern, with illicit funds often channelled offshore or invested in high-value assets. Despite no longer being on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list, the country's anti-money laundering (AML) framework is underdeveloped. Authorities lack the capacity to effectively investigate and prosecute money laundering cases, and only a handful of convictions was recorded in recent years. In 2024, government agencies signed an

AML Joint Task Force agreement to improve coordination in financial crime investigations, with the aim of preventing Papua New Guinea from returning to the FATF grey list.

Papua New Guinea's economy relies heavily on extractive industries, especially logging, mining and fishing, but these industries are poorly regulated, and illicit financial flows linked to resource exploitation often exceed the legal trade. The informal sector employs an estimated 80% of adults, and youth unemployment is chronic. The lack of access to financial services and weak regulatory enforcement further contribute to the country's economic vulnerabilities, which are exacerbated by limited social protections, particularly for marginalized groups, including women and rural communities.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Papua New Guinea has limited victim and witness support services, especially for victims of human trafficking. Law enforcement agencies lack the training and resources to identify and assist victims, often deporting people without screening for trafficking indicators. The absence of a witness protection programme discourages people from reporting crimes, while LGBTQ+ victims face additional barriers in accessing support services. Civil society organizations provide the majority of available victim assistance but are constrained by inadequate funding and limited geographic reach.

The country has failed to allocate sufficient resources for awareness campaigns or enforcement to prevent trafficking and organized crime. The National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee is largely inactive, and existing anti-trafficking laws are poorly enforced. The government has launched the Revised National Security Policy 2024–2029, with the aim of improving national security coordination, and introduced a new Social Media Policy that seeks to combat online crimes, including trafficking and cyber harassment, through stricter digital regulations.

Civil society organizations, including churches, fill gaps left by the state, providing advocacy and essential health and education services, but face funding constraints and challenges to expand their reach. The media landscape is constrained, with journalists facing censorship, threats and financial pressures from corporate ownership. Although independent reporting is permitted, the major media outlets are foreign-owned, raising concerns about editorial influence.

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.