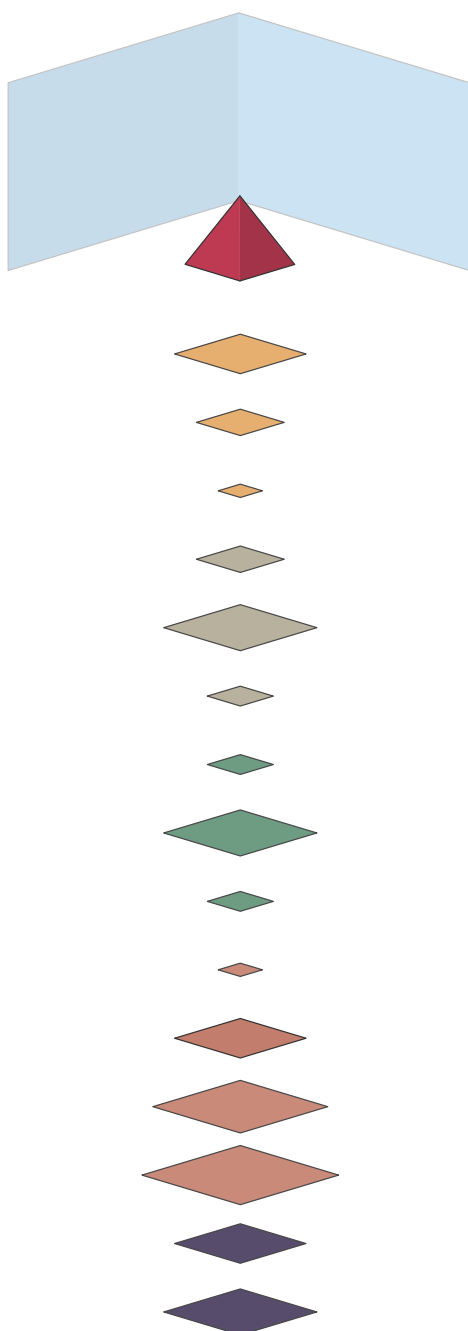
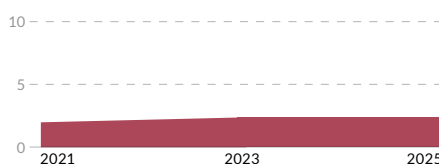


 SAMOA



 2.38 $\nearrow 0.05$
CRIMINALITY SCORE

185th of 193 countries $\nearrow 3$
9th of 14 Oceanian countries $\nearrow 2$
2nd of 3 Polynesian countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS **2.57** $\nearrow 0.40$

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



CRIMINAL ACTORS **2.20** $\nearrow 0.30$

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	3.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	2.50	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	3.50	$\nearrow 1.00$
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	1.00	0.00



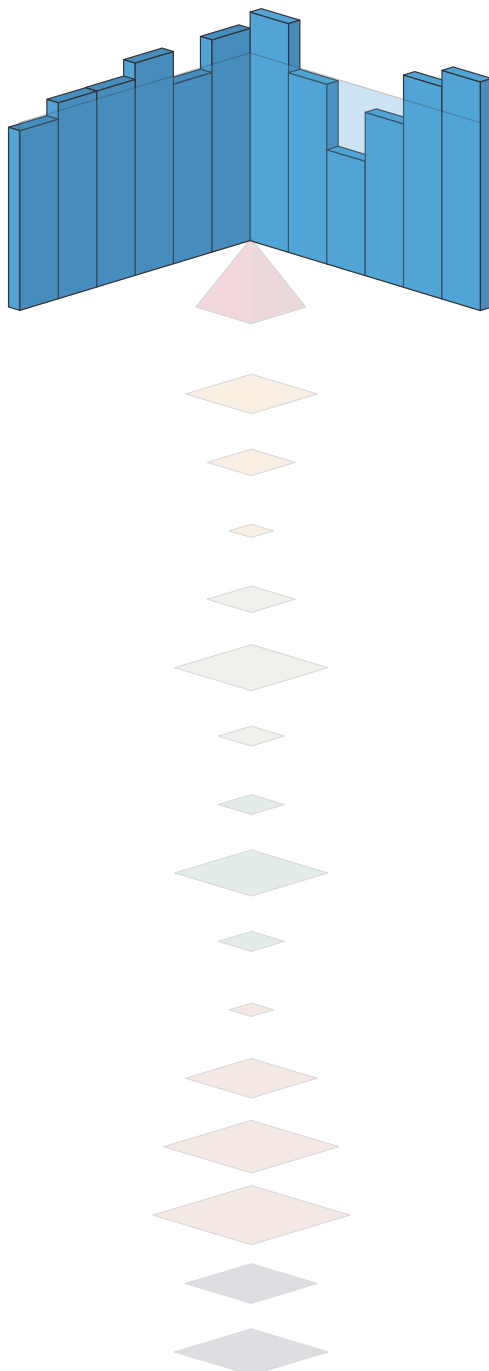
This project was funded in part
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Funded by
the European Union

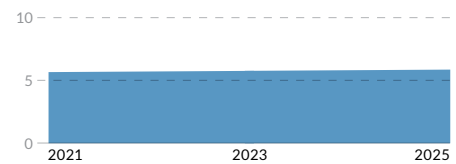
ENACT is funded by the European Union
and implemented by the Institute for
Security Studies and INTERPOL, in
affiliation with the Global Initiative Against
Transnational Organized Crime.

 SAMOA



 5.88 $\nearrow 0.04$
RESILIENCE SCORE

39th of 193 countries $\nearrow 5$
4th of 14 Oceanian countries $\nearrow 1$
2nd of 3 Polynesian countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	5.50 $\nearrow 1.00$
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	6.00 $\nearrow 0.50$
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.00 0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.50 0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	5.50 $\searrow 0.50$
LAW ENFORCEMENT	6.50 0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	7.00 $\searrow 0.50$
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.50 0.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	3.50 $\nearrow 0.50$
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	5.00 $\searrow 0.50$
PREVENTION	6.50 0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	7.00 0.00



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Samoa is an origin country for human trafficking, primarily for forced labour in agriculture, construction, food service and domestic work in New Zealand. However, limited data and the absence of systematic reporting obscure the full extent of this criminal market. Despite some governmental initiatives to combat child labour, legal loopholes, such as the low minimum working age and the lack of laws prohibiting the use of children in illicit activities, increase vulnerability. The cultural norm of deference to elder male family members may also discourage victims from reporting exploitation. Overall, human trafficking appears sporadic and typically involves opportunistic predators and small groups rather than structured networks. Similarly, the human smuggling market in Samoa is largely opportunistic, with no evidence of organized smuggling networks. The country is a transit point rather than a key player in Pacific smuggling routes. Unlike in the Pacific, where human smuggling is often linked to maritime arrivals, Samoan authorities have to be vigilant against fraudulent documents and unauthorized arrivals at air transit points. The country's lack of an asylum system presents additional risks to smuggled people who may require international protection. There is no evidence of extortion or protection racketeering in Samoa, but potential future developments are of concern, particularly in connection to the increasing presence of outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMCGs) in the region.

TRADE

Samoa has minimal arms trafficking, low firearm ownership and strict licensing regulations. Despite reports of illicit firearms, there is no evidence of organized trafficking networks operating within the country. Most illegal firearms are imported and often tied to broader transnational criminal networks that exchange weapons for drugs. The country has comprehensive legislation, but loopholes exist, with illicit firearms occasionally diverted from police and military stockpiles. The counterfeit goods market in Samoa is small and largely unstructured, with limited evidence of transnational connections. However, concerns remain over counterfeit pharmaceuticals and other products entering Samoa through illicit supply chains. Although regional trends could increase Samoa's vulnerability if border controls are not strengthened, no large-scale counterfeiting operations have been identified to date. Information on the illicit trade in excise goods in Samoa is limited, with no evidence indicating that organized groups are involved. In addition, the potential of this already minimal criminal market is further reduced by the declining local consumption of

cigarettes and shift towards less expensive, locally made cigarettes and local substitutes for alcoholic beverages, not subjected to an excise tax.

ENVIRONMENT

In Samoa, illegal logging occurs on a small, opportunistic scale and is not widespread. Most forest loss is attributed to unregulated logging for subsistence farming rather than structured criminal operations. The criminal market for fauna crimes in Samoa is small and opportunistic, with no evidence of significant organized activity. Despite being a marine biodiversity hotspot with a diverse fish fauna, most of Samoa's fishing industry operates legally and is under good supervision. Nevertheless, illegal fishing, particularly by foreign vessels, does occur, threatening local fisheries, while overfishing (including the illicit capture of protected species such as turtles and sea cucumbers) has raised environmental and economic concerns. Local communities actively report illegal wildlife trade, but enforcement remains weak. Destructive fishing practices have damaged reef ecosystems and contribute to long-term ecological damage.

Samoa does not have a major market for non-renewable resource crimes. The primary concern is illegal sand mining, which has contributed to coastal erosion and environmental degradation. Although risks remain, there were no recorded cases of illegal sand mining during the reporting period.

DRUGS

In Samoa, the most prevalent illicit drug is cannabis, which is cultivated locally by small-scale entrepreneurs rather than larger organized crime groups. Cannabis use is prohibited but remains widespread, and law enforcement efforts have led to increased seizures. Moreover, the trafficking and consumption of methamphetamine are growing in Samoa, and law enforcement operations have uncovered connections between methamphetamine trafficking and other forms of organized crime, including stolen goods markets. Despite high costs, the demand for synthetic drugs has increased, particularly among the younger population. Samoa has participated in regional initiatives to combat synthetic drug trade but has limited forensic and enforcement capacity.

Samoa serves as a transit point for the cocaine trafficking, being located on the regional trade routes used by criminal organizations between Latin America and Australia and New Zealand. The domestic market for cocaine is small due to the high cost of the drug, but there are indications of some level of local consumption. The involvement of transnational criminal groups, including OMCGs and

deportees with criminal backgrounds, has heightened concerns over Samoa's role in the Pacific drug trade. The heroin trade is virtually non-existent in Samoa, and demand for the drug remains low.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Some cyber-dependent crimes occur in Samoa, although the market remains relatively underdeveloped. Ransomware and distributed denial of service attacks are the most common cyber-dependent offences in Samoa, targeting both government agencies and financial institutions. Awareness of cybersecurity risks is low, but there is little evidence of structured cybercriminal groups operating domestically. However, as digital connectivity expands, cybercrime is expected to rise, and so stronger cybersecurity measures and enforcement will be necessary.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Samoa has a history of financial crimes linked to its status as a tax haven. Shell companies are frequently used for tax evasion, and foreign actors exploit regulatory loopholes. Documented cases of embezzlement and banking fraud include major financial mismanagement within institutions. There is no evidence of organized criminal groups operating in Samoa's financial sector, but systemic vulnerabilities make it an attractive location for financial crime.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Criminal activities remain largely decentralized and opportunistic, with no evidence of structured, hierarchical mafia-style groups operating in Samoa. Organized crime is widely regarded as an external phenomenon, often linked to foreign influences rather than domestic groups. Samoa's criminal networks are dominated by small-scale criminal entrepreneurs who engage in illicit activities such as cannabis production, illegal fishing and limited trafficking operations. Although the country has no widespread or concentrated criminal networks, some people have been involved in transnational criminal activities, particularly in countries with large Samoan diaspora communities, such as Australia and the US. These overseas-based groups, often structured as street gangs, occasionally maintain ties with individuals in Samoa, raising concerns over their potential influence on local crime. Moreover, some deportees from countries such as New Zealand, Australia and the US have past gang affiliations and may continue criminal activities upon returning, potentially contributing to the expansion of local organized crime. In recent years, gang chapters have emerged in Samoa, with authorities reporting attempts to establish affiliations with foreign gang structures, particularly those linked to methamphetamine trafficking. The influence of US-based gang culture, such as the Bloods and Crips, is believed to be growing and adapting to the Samoan context, where criminal operations occur in villages

rather than urban centres. However, there is currently no evidence of systematic violence associated with these groups. Over the past decade, criminal networks have remained stable in Samoa, but law enforcement continues to monitor potential transnational connections that may increase criminal activity.

Although corruption exists within Samoa's state institutions, there is little direct evidence of state-embedded actors being involved in organized crime. Certain high-level officials have been complicit in criminal activities, especially drug trafficking, and police officers and border officials have been implicated in facilitating illicit drug shipments. There are reports of customs officers allegedly receiving bribes to allow the smuggling of contraband through ports and airports, but these incidents appear to be isolated and anecdotal.

The foreign actors who influence Samoa's criminal landscape are mainly transnational organized crime groups, particularly from Asia, involved in drug trafficking, human trafficking and illicit gambling operations. Of concern is the presence of OMCGs from Australia and New Zealand in the broader Pacific region, as they are known to be involved in drug trafficking and other illicit activities. In addition, foreign business interests, particularly Chinese companies, have been linked to money laundering and casino operations. The case of a well-known casino being embroiled in corruption allegations highlights the potential risks of foreign business influence. Samoa's lenient business regulations have made it an attractive destination for foreign corporations seeking offshore registration, which contributes to illicit financial flows and tax evasion. However, there is no significant evidence of domestic private-sector actors systematically participating in criminal activities.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Samoa is widely regarded as a politically stable country with relatively low levels of organized crime and political violence. Over the past decade, the country has not experienced any internal or external conflicts, and there is little evidence that criminal actors influence its democratic processes. The 2021 constitutional crisis, which resulted from electoral disputes, was resolved through the judicial process without police involvement, demonstrating the strength of Samoa's legal framework. However, the crisis also exposed the complexities of Samoa's traditional power structures, which remain deeply intertwined with its modern political institutions.

Government transparency and accountability are topics of public concern. Corruption is not endemic, but isolated incidents have been reported, particularly involving election-related bribery. The country's anti-corruption framework is robust, with penalties of up to 14 years in prison for corruption-related offences. However, enforcement is inconsistent, and certain cases of mismanagement and financial irregularities go unpunished. The Ombudsman's Office and the Public Service Commission play a critical role in addressing corruption complaints, but Samoa does not have a dedicated anti-corruption tribunal. Delays in the publication of audit reports and financial oversight are also an issue.

Samoa has demonstrated a strong commitment to international cooperation in combatting organized crime and is party to numerous treaties, including the UN Convention against Corruption and the Arms Trade Treaty. However, Samoa has not yet ratified key Palermo protocols related to human trafficking and arms trafficking, and the lack of bilateral extradition agreements hampers cross-border legal enforcement. Regional cooperation efforts, including partnerships with Australia and New Zealand, have been instrumental in bolstering Samoa's cybersecurity and law enforcement capabilities.

Samoa has a well-established legal framework and national policies covering organized crime, but some key areas require modernization, such as the drug legislation (the primary law dates back to 1967). In 2023, the country began reviewing its gun laws, acknowledging the growing threat of illicit arms in the Pacific, and gun amnesty programmes have successfully removed illegal weapons. Samoa has laws that prohibit human trafficking but lacks provisions for temporary stays or re-entry for trafficking victims, limiting their ability to collaborate with law enforcement.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Samoa's judiciary is widely regarded as independent, but recent legislative changes have raised concerns about judicial autonomy, as the executive now has power to discipline judicial officers. The country does not have any specialized judicial units dedicated to organized crime, and legal experts have called for reforms to address emerging criminal trends, particularly the rise of transnational criminal networks. The prison system's challenges include overcrowding, understaffing and security vulnerabilities, which have resulted in multiple escapes in recent years. Nevertheless, independent observers have been allowed to conduct monitoring visits and reported no major human rights violations in detention facilities.

Law enforcement in Samoa is relatively small, with approximately 600 officers, and has limited resources. Isolated incidents of police corruption and misconduct have been reported, but these are not widespread. Samoa's police force does not routinely carry firearms, relying instead on a strict approval system for firearm use. The country is a member of INTERPOL and participates in the Pacific Transnational Crime Network, which supports regional cooperation on transnational crime. However, the country does not have a dedicated domestic law enforcement unit specifically focused on organized crime. Samoa's traditional village governance structures also play an important role in crime prevention. Local village authorities are widely regarded as not corrupt and actively assist state law enforcement in addressing drug-related crimes and other illicit activities.

A specialized maritime unit effectively polices and monitors the country's maritime borders. Samoa has partnered with Australia to enhance maritime surveillance, including the acquisition of a new patrol boat in 2024. The US has also supported Samoa through initiatives aimed at improving maritime security and combatting illegal fishing. Cybersecurity remains a significant weakness, but the government is working towards ratifying the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Samoa's small economy and banking sector have limited its exposure to large-scale money laundering operations. However, its status as an offshore financial jurisdiction presents vulnerabilities, particularly through its Trust and Company Service Providers, which are licensed entities that act as the local agents for clients seeking to register international entities. Although Samoa has strengthened its anti-money laundering framework, it remains on the EU's list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes,

and no money-laundering cases were prosecuted during the reporting period. The financial regulatory framework is generally robust, but enforcement capabilities are limited and, although the government has introduced reforms to strengthen financial oversight, regulatory loopholes remain.

Samoa's economy activity has largely recovered from COVID 19, although a significant portion of the population remains financially excluded, particularly in rural areas. The informal economy, including remittances and untaxed trade, plays a crucial role in Samoa's economic landscape.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Samoa provides limited support services for victims of organized crime. The country has witness protection legislation but no comprehensive victim support framework. Gender-based violence remains a pressing issue, with high rates of under-reporting due to cultural norms. To address these challenges, the government collaborates with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations, but funding for victim assistance remains insufficient. Crime prevention efforts focus largely on community-based initiatives. Village councils have partnered with the police to promote anti-drug campaigns. Environmental crime prevention is also a priority, with Samoa actively participating in regional fisheries management and biodiversity monitoring programmes, as well as incorporating technology in research and monitoring. While the country's prevention efforts have focused on key issues, other areas of criminality have not received as much attention. Samoa's civil society organizations play an active role in social protection but face financial and operational limitations. The Samoa Umbrella for NGOs (SUNGO) is a key body for capacity-building and advocacy. NGOs provide essential services, focusing on domestic violence, human rights and drug rehabilitation, although many operate without government funding. Press freedom is generally respected, but journalists face occasional intimidation, and access to government-held information remains restricted.

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