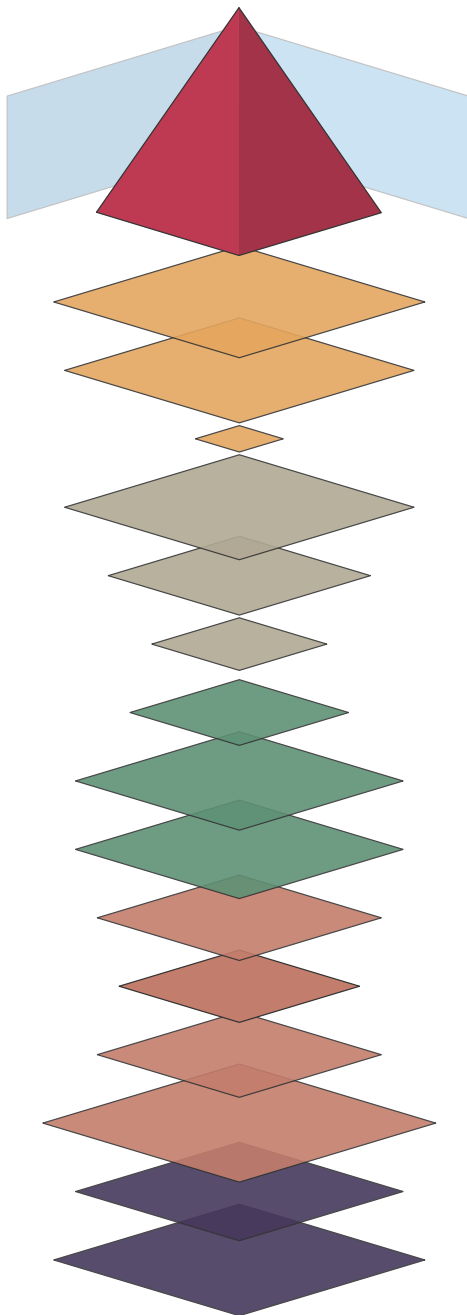


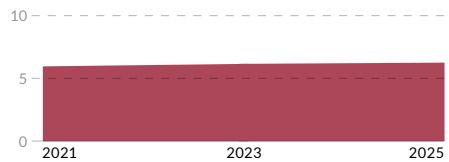


SAUDI ARABIA



6.33 $\nearrow 0.10$ CRIMINALITY SCORE

43rd of 193 countries $\searrow 5$
18th of 46 Asian countries $\searrow 2$
8th of 14 Western Asian countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS **6.67** $\nearrow 0.10$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	8.50 $\nearrow 0.50$
HUMAN SMUGGLING	8.00 $\nearrow 0.50$
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	2.00 0.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	8.00 0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	6.00 0.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	4.00 0.00
FLORA CRIMES	5.00 0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	7.50 0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	7.50 0.00
HEROIN TRADE	6.50 0.00
COCAINE TRADE	5.50 0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	6.50 0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	9.00 0.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	7.50 0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	8.50 $\nearrow 0.50$



CRIMINAL ACTORS **6.00** $\nearrow 0.10$

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	3.00 0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.50 0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	9.00 $\nearrow 0.50$
FOREIGN ACTORS	3.50 0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	8.00 0.00



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

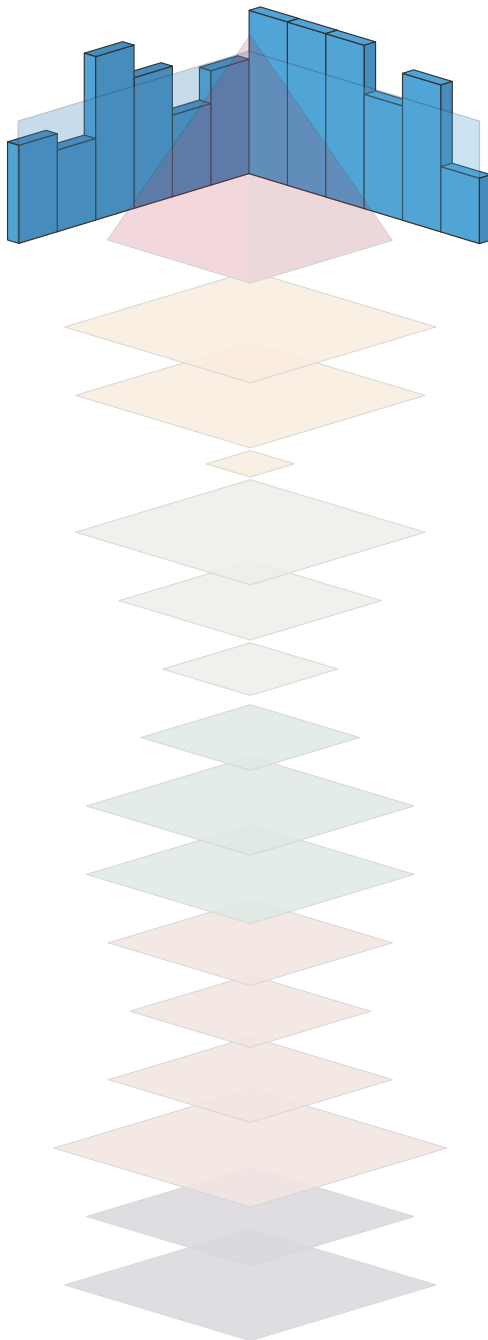


Funded by the European Union

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.



SAUDI ARABIA



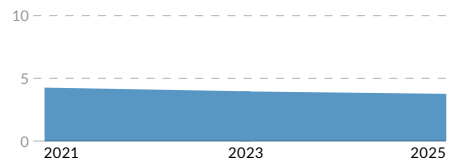
3.79 $\downarrow 0.21$

RESILIENCE SCORE

141st of 193 countries $\downarrow 9$

32nd of 46 Asian countries $\downarrow 6$

9th of 14 Western Asian countries $\downarrow 1$



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	3.00	$\downarrow 0.50$
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	2.50	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	5.00	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	4.00	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	2.50	$\downarrow 0.50$
LAW ENFORCEMENT	3.50	$\downarrow 0.50$
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	5.00	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.00	$\downarrow 0.50$
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	5.00	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	3.50	$\downarrow 0.50$
PREVENTION	4.50	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	2.00	0.00



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking in Saudi Arabia is significant, with labour and sex trafficking the dominant forms. Labour trafficking is fuelled by the country's reliance on foreign workers, often subjected to passport confiscation, wage withholding and harsh conditions. Sex trafficking largely involves foreign victims, sometimes facilitated by state-linked actors, with prostitution networks also engaging in drug distribution. Moreover, child exploitation through begging increases during religious seasons, particularly among migrant children. Trafficking operations involve private entities and criminal networks, with evidence of state complicity. The market is transnational, driven by demand for cheap labour. Structural systems like the Kafala and male guardianship exacerbate vulnerabilities, with recent cases highlighting ongoing exploitation despite reforms.

Human smuggling into Saudi Arabia has intensified in recent years, with migrant flows along the eastern route reaching record highs. The country remains a major hub for illicit migration, driven by labour demand and economic incentives. Smuggling networks, often involving actors from Saudi Arabia, Yemen and African countries, facilitate migrant flows despite security crackdowns. Migrants face escalating fees and increased risks, including exploitation, forced labour and recruitment into armed conflict. Smuggling networks are linked to arms and drug trafficking and provide financial support to militias. Despite stricter enforcement and penalties, the market persists, exacerbated by porous borders, regional instability and allegations of abuses by Saudi security forces. The extortion and protection racketeering market in Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, remains small and fragmented. Instances of extortion appear isolated and lack the scale or coordination necessary to constitute a consolidated criminal market in the country.

TRADE

Reliable data on arms trafficking in Saudi Arabia is scarce, making it challenging to assess the extent of the trade. Nevertheless, illicit weapons, primarily traced back to Yemen, Iraq and Jordan, continue to circulate within the country. Although there have been few recent reports of significant weapons seizures, this does not necessarily indicate a reduction in illicit activity. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia's reported role in supplying arms to conflict zones, coupled with its status as one of the world's top military spenders and the volume of weapons present, underscores the potential for ongoing arms trafficking. The counterfeit goods market in Saudi Arabia is notable, impacting sectors

such as pharmaceuticals, electronics, food, automotive parts and luxury goods. Products, often sourced from South East Asia, range from high-end items to everyday consumer goods, posing health and safety risks. Local demand, fuelled by consumers seeking cheaper alternatives and tourist influxes, drives the market, with online sales playing a significant role. Criminal actors include those from the private sector and smuggling networks that facilitate importation and distribution. Despite significant economic losses, the clandestine nature of the market complicates precise measurement, and counterfeit goods remain widely accessible across major urban areas. The illicit trade in excisable goods in Saudi Arabia, notably tobacco and alcohol, appears relatively consolidated and profitable due to high taxation and prohibition. Despite limited official data, frequent seizures suggest substantial and regular smuggling activity. Local demand – exacerbated by high taxes on cigarettes and bans on alcohol – drives the market, with goods sold through underground networks and some retail outlets. Criminal actors include nationals and non-nationals, with allegations of regime-linked monopolization. Price disparities with neighbouring countries further incentivizes smuggling.

ENVIRONMENT

Although information on flora-related crimes in Saudi Arabia remains limited, the country is considered one of the main global destinations for agarwood. This raises concerns about the potential smuggling of raw agarwood, a highly valuable and sought-after commodity. Additionally, the country's growing reliance on timber for large-scale construction projects, as part of its broader sustainability agenda may increase the risk of illegal timber sourcing in the future, particularly in the absence of effective oversight and regulatory mechanisms. However, fauna crimes – particularly the smuggling of rare wild animals, including cheetahs, gazelles, falcons, lions and endangered Arabian leopards – remains pervasive in Saudi Arabia. Despite stricter regulations, border security measures and international cooperation, smuggling persists, driven by high financial incentives and strong local demand, particularly among affluent collectors. Saudi Arabia acts as a significant hub for the exotic animal trade, with criminal networks, including both Saudi and foreign actors, orchestrating cross-border trafficking. Private sector involvement, such as pet stores and animal dealers, further facilitates trade. The ongoing trafficking of threatened species like chimpanzees and falcons continues to raise serious conservation and regulatory concerns.

Saudi Arabia continues to play a significant role in both fuel and gold smuggling, although the smuggling of oil derivatives has reportedly slightly declined due to tighter border

controls, adjusted pricing and more stringent penalties. Despite this improvement, allegations of misappropriated national oil reserves still linger. Meanwhile, gold smuggling remains robust, with the country serving as both a source and transit point, particularly along routes to India and Bangladesh. These operations reportedly involve transnational criminal networks, private sector actors and foreign nationals, notably from South Asia. Saudi Arabia's position in the international gold trade is further reinforced by its dependence on imported gold, primarily from the UAE, which has been linked to conflict-sourced supplies.

DRUGS

The heroin market in Saudi Arabia appears consolidated, with significant seizures in recent years indicating persistent illicit trade. Saudi Arabia serves primarily as a destination country, with heroin trafficked mainly from Afghanistan through international routes. High prices for heroin, driven by severe penalties including the death penalty, provide strong incentives for smuggling and distribution by local and foreign criminal actors. Seizures often occur alongside synthetic drugs, suggesting market interconnections. Similarly, the cocaine trade in Saudi Arabia is relatively consolidated, with consistent seizures in recent years indicating ongoing trafficking through ports, airports and land borders, including shipments from Malaysia and Nigeria. While not as prevalent as cannabis or synthetic drugs, cocaine maintains a stable presence, driven by steady if limited local demand. Despite strict penalties and high prices – among the highest globally – substantial quantities continue to enter the market, contributing to Saudi Arabia's broader criminal economy.

The cannabis trade in Saudi Arabia remains significant, with large seizures, particularly of hashish, reported in recent years. The country serves as a key destination market, driven by demand among young people and facilitated by porous borders with Yemen and neighbouring countries. Smuggling and distribution networks involve both Saudi and foreign actors, including Yemenis, Nigerians, Ethiopians, Somalis and Pakistanis. Some state-linked people have also been implicated. The cannabis market overlaps with synthetic drugs, qat smuggling and human trafficking activities, reflecting broader criminal interconnections.

The synthetic drug market in Saudi Arabia, particularly for Captagon, remains highly pervasive despite intensified enforcement. A significant amount of Captagon pills were seized in recent years, with notable smuggling attempts intercepted at airports, ports and borders. Saudi Arabia serves as the primary regional destination, with supply chains originating mainly from Syria and Lebanon, often via Jordan. Smuggling networks involve foreign actors, tribal groups and corrupt officials, with some proceeds reportedly funding militias abroad. Captagon prices surge significantly upon entry into Saudi Arabia, reflecting high profit margins.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crime in Saudi Arabia is highly pervasive, exerting significant pressure on the country's financial, energy and critical service sectors. In recent years, Saudi Arabia has been the target of repeated cyberattacks, many involving ransomware, data breaches and dark web activity, with retail, finance and healthcare among the hardest hit. Both ransomware groups and state-sponsored actors have targeted Saudi entities, blurring distinctions between politically and financially motivated attacks. Despite strengthened cybersecurity legislation and international collaboration, the frequency and sophistication of these incursions continue to rise, posing ongoing risks to the country's digital infrastructure.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes in Saudi Arabia appear to be consolidating, as evidenced by a notable increase in reported fraud, embezzlement, tax evasion and misuse of funds. Such activities involve both Saudi nationals and foreign nationals, spurred in part by corruption among certain government officials and private sector actors. Of particular concern is embezzlement associated with Hajj contracts, which are frequently awarded to entities linked to the political elite. Furthermore, nepotism, opaque corporate ownership and patronage networks elevate financial crime risks in key sectors such as oil.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Although Saudi Arabia does not have traditional mafia organizations with some long-standing operations, groups with political objectives and structured, mafia-like characteristics reportedly engage in criminal activities to fund their agendas. On the other hand, criminal networks in Saudi Arabia engage across multiple illicit markets, involving both nationals and non-nationals. Their activities span national borders and are marked by collaboration with groups in neighbouring countries such as Yemen, Lebanon and Syria, as well as regions in Asia and Africa. These loosely connected actors are involved in human trafficking, smuggling, drug trafficking and the illicit arms trade. While their operations are nationwide, some areas see a stronger presence. Public reporting rarely identifies specific figures, reflecting the networks' discreet operational style, reliance on diverse routes and dynamic international connections.

State-embedded actors in Saudi Arabia reportedly play a role in organized crime, spanning multiple sectors and to varying degrees. Financial crimes, including embezzlement, the misuse of public funds and money laundering, are said to be widespread among government officials in areas such as health, security and local administration – issues highlighted by large-scale anti-corruption efforts in 2024. In addition, credible reports point to state-linked involvement in the synthetic drug trade, particularly in the Captagon

market. Members of the royal family and certain officials are alleged to protect trafficking networks, often utilizing private aviation for international smuggling. Recent arrests have further underscored the depth of official complicity in the illicit drug trade.

Foreign actors are also part of the organized crime landscape in Saudi Arabia, albeit to a lesser extent, particularly people from Pakistani, Indian, Yemeni and Syrian backgrounds, with Nigerian and Burmese gangs also active within local ghettos. These groups are commonly implicated in human trafficking, drug and arms smuggling, and financial crimes such as fraud. Criminal activities are concentrated in major cities like Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam, as well as along the country's southern and northern borders. In addition to diaspora-linked actors, foreign political groups, notably the Houthis, engage in organized criminal activities to fund

operations, maintaining a presence along the Saudi–Yemeni border and conducting attacks within Saudi territory, further intertwining political conflict with criminal enterprise.

Private sector actors are also known to be involved in Saudi Arabia's landscape, in particular exploiting commercial structures and financial systems to launder criminal proceeds. Through the establishment of fictitious companies, the facilitation of large-scale financial transactions and the cross-border movement of illicit funds, these actors enable the integration of proceeds from a range of criminal activities into the formal economy. Their involvement is a central feature of the country's illicit financial landscape. Moreover, the significant overlap between public and private sector interests complicates efforts to distinguish between state-affiliated people and those genuinely operating within the private sector.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy without elected governing bodies, maintaining authority through tribal, familial and professional networks. The government exercises considerable power over political institutions, restricts political rights, criminalizes dissent and enforces policies that disadvantage women and minorities. In combating organized crime – particularly human trafficking and cybercrime – Saudi Arabia has implemented cybersecurity legislation and participated in various international initiatives. However, critics argue these measures prioritize preserving regime stability over meaningful reform. Moreover, regional conflicts such as the Yemeni civil war have created opportunities for organized crime networks in Saudi Arabia which exploit cross-border vulnerabilities for arms, drug and human smuggling.

The government has implemented various anti-corruption measures, including empowering the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Authority to investigate and prosecute corruption, as well as adopting electronic government services to enhance transparency. The country participates in international anti-corruption initiatives and has introduced electronic payment systems to minimize fraud risks. It publishes its national budget and procurement data to promote public oversight. While international cooperation and some improvements in governance indicators have been noted, concerns persist regarding politicized prosecutions, lack of transparency in state finances, and the enduring influence of nepotism and favouritism. Structural barriers, limited access to corporate and government information, and a repressive environment continue to hinder genuine accountability.

Saudi Arabia has shown international commitment to combating organized crime by signing the Arab Protocol to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and ratifying related international agreements, including the Palermo Protocol. Bilaterally, Saudi Arabia is also party to multiple agreements with both regional and international counterparts aimed at enhancing cooperation against specific criminal markets, with recent efforts focusing on the illicit trade of drugs and chemical precursors. The country maintains extradition agreements with multiple states to enable the transfer of people accused or convicted of crimes. However, assessing the effectiveness of these mechanisms is limited by the lack of publicly available information on extradition cases involving organized crime over the past five years.

Saudi Arabia's legal framework does not categorize organized crime separately but addresses related activities, including financial crimes, drug trafficking, arms smuggling and cybercrimes. Laws targeting human trafficking have been enacted, though persistent criticisms focus on inadequate protections for migrant workers under the Kafala system and male guardianship practices. Measures against financial fraud have strengthened, with penalties, reporting mechanisms and incentives for whistle-blowers. Despite reforms, financial crimes remain a significant challenge. The country continues to apply the death penalty extensively, particularly for drug offences, with executions rising sharply in 2024. International criticism raises concern about due process and the targeting of vulnerable populations.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Saudi Arabia lacks specialized courts for organized crime cases, which are adjudicated through ordinary courts applying Sharia-based criminal law. The judiciary lacks independence, with judges appointed and supervised by the executive branch, raising concerns about judicial impartiality and corruption. Traditional conflict resolution through tribal arbitration remains common despite formal reforms. In prisons, while official reports suggest generally sound management, external sources highlight severe deficiencies, including torture, inadequate healthcare, overcrowding and restrictions on family contact. These conditions, which fall short of international standards, not only impact prisoner welfare but may also foster organized criminal activities within the prison environment. Surveillance mechanisms in detention centres have not led to significant accountability.

Similarly, the country does not have specialized law enforcement units for organized crime, with general police forces addressing such cases. Nevertheless, law enforcement is adequately resourced, funded primarily by the state and generally trusted by local communities. The country participates actively in regional and international intelligence sharing, contributing to operations against transnational crime. However, law enforcement is politicized, with credible reports of torture, mistreatment and politically motivated reprisals. Despite human rights training programmes, concerns persist over widespread abuse and impunity for security forces that undermine trust and due process.

Saudi Arabia faces persistent border security challenges due to its vast desert terrain, porous borders and proximity to conflict-affected countries such as Yemen, Iraq and Syria. Despite having strong, technologically equipped border forces, criminal infiltration remains a concern, particularly along the southern border with Yemen, where conflict has heightened instability. Human rights reports have also raised allegations of abuses by Saudi border forces. Additionally, Saudi Arabia has made significant investments in cybersecurity infrastructure, establishing dedicated agencies and collaborating with international partners to protect digital networks and critical infrastructure from cyber threats, demonstrating a growing capability to detect and respond to cyberattacks.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Saudi Arabia has implemented robust anti-money laundering measures, establishing a Financial Intelligence Unit to oversee suspicious transaction reporting and compliance with international standards. The country enforces strict regulations, with penalties including heavy fines and imprisonment. Although Saudi Arabia faces ongoing risks such as informal money transfer systems, complex corporate structures and increased cross-border trade, it has strengthened controls through legislative updates and regulatory supervision. Recent measures also target

the potential abuse of crowdfunding and online gambling platforms. Despite the absence of public statistics on money laundering cases, local reports highlight major incidents involving both nationals and expatriates laundering significant sums through commercial networks.

Saudi Arabia has introduced reforms to facilitate legitimate business operations, improve investment procedures and stimulate private sector growth, particularly in sectors like tourism, industry and technology. Economic regulations generally support business activities, and property rights are upheld. While no specific sectors are controlled by organized crime, border regions remain vulnerable to illicit activities. Despite improvements, persistent bureaucratic barriers hinder full economic freedom. Although the ease of starting a business has improved and some financial restrictions have been lifted, concerns remain that reforms disproportionately benefit groups connected to the royal family, limiting broader transparency.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Saudi Arabia has enhanced protections for victims of organized crime through initiatives such as the Center for the Protection of Whistleblowers, Witnesses, Experts and Victims, which provides security and legal, psychological and financial support. The country collaborates with international organizations to strengthen victim protection and rehabilitation efforts, including combating human trafficking. Measures such as wage protection and contractual reforms aim to reduce worker exploitation. Despite these efforts, deficiencies in victim services persist. Civil society organizations contribute by operating drug treatment facilities and supporting victims of addiction, although stigma surrounding substance abuse remains prevalent.

Saudi Arabia has adopted national strategies to prevent organized crime, including initiatives to combat human trafficking, cybercrime, drug trafficking and money laundering. Awareness campaigns and training programmes have been expanded, with notable efforts to educate workers about their rights. Cybersecurity measures have strengthened protections against online crime, and initiatives aiming to enhance consumer trust in e-commerce. Authorities have also increased enforcement against counterfeit goods and intellectual property violations. Additionally, Saudi Arabia promotes crime reporting through whistle-blower protections and incentive programmes. Despite active participation in regional initiatives, some scepticism remains regarding the depth of these commitments.

Civil society organizations in Saudi Arabia play an important role in combating organized crime, particularly by supporting victims of human trafficking through shelter, legal aid and psychosocial services. These organizations collaborate with government bodies to enhance victim protection, though they face challenges such as licensing delays, harassment

and restricted freedom of expression. Government control over media and civil society limits independent advocacy efforts. Media coverage of organized crime is constrained by censorship, with independent journalism largely absent. Journalists face harassment, detention and surveillance, reflecting a restricted press environment that undermines transparency and limits scrutiny of organized crime issues.

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