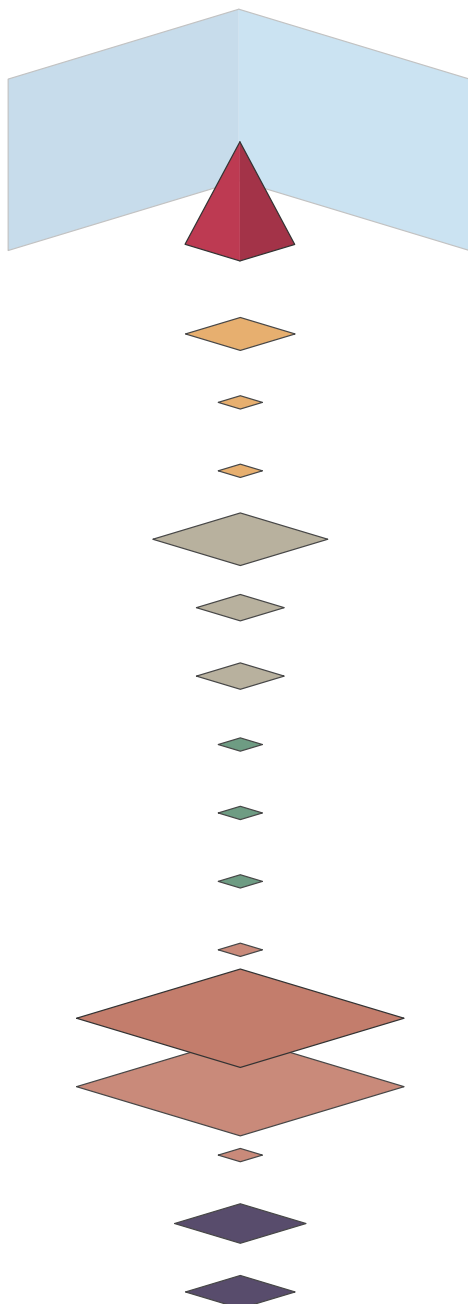


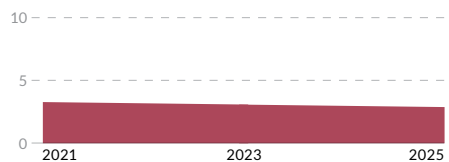


ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES



2.87 $\nearrow 0.22$
CRIMINALITY SCORE

178th of 193 countries $\nearrow 4$
33rd of 35 American countries $\nearrow 2$
11th of 13 Caribbean countries $\nearrow 2$



CRIMINAL MARKETS 2.53 $\nearrow 0.13$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	2.50	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	1.00	0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	1.00	0.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	4.00	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	2.00	0.00
ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	2.00	$\nearrow 1.00$
FLORA CRIMES	1.00	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	1.00	$\nearrow 1.00$
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	1.00	0.00
HEROIN TRADE	1.00	0.00
COCAINE TRADE	7.50	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	7.50	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	1.00	0.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	3.00	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	2.50	0.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS 3.20 $\nearrow 0.30$

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5.00	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	2.00	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	5.50	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	2.00	$\nearrow 1.00$



This project was funded in part
by a grant from the United
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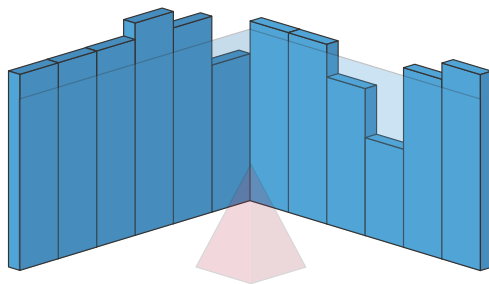


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ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES



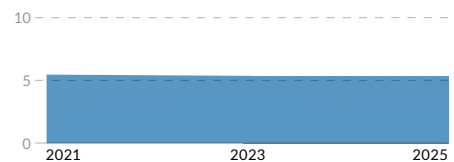
5.42 $\nearrow 0.04$

RESILIENCE SCORE

60th of 193 countries $\nearrow 7$

11th of 35 American countries $\nearrow 1$

4th of 13 Caribbean countries $\nearrow 1$



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	6.00	0.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	6.00	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.00	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.50	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	6.00	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	4.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	5.50	$\searrow 0.50$
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.50	0.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	4.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	3.00	0.00
PREVENTION	5.50	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	6.00	0.00



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

St. Vincent and the Grenadines faces a human trafficking problem, predominantly involving commercial sex and labour trafficking. Victims include both nationals and migrants, especially from the Caribbean and Asia. Child trafficking, often sexual in nature, has also surged. Although the overall market remains small, it remains a notable concern. There is no evidence of an established human smuggling market, likely due to the country's small population and territory. The lack of criminalization may contribute to the absence of reported cases, which could also be a result of insufficient monitoring by law enforcement agencies. There is also no evidence of widespread extortion or protection racketeering. While sporadic incidents have been noted, it remains unclear whether they indicate a broader pattern of organized criminal activity.

TRADE

Although arms trafficking in St. Vincent and the Grenadines remains limited, the country's strategic location as a transit point between the Americas and Europe has given rise to a notable market. Recent seizures have revealed diverse concealment methods, including barrels, electronic devices and vehicles. Reports indicate a growing exchange of firearms for drugs, further linking this market to drug trafficking and gun-related violence.

The counterfeit goods market is small, primarily involving clothing, footwear, electronics and pharmaceuticals, with no evidence of domestic production. The overall prevalence of this market appears limited.

Similarly, there is no evidence of a consolidated illicit market for excisable goods. However, the country's location and dispersed island territory create conditions that could facilitate undetected smuggling. Given the high level of alcohol consumption, there is a possibility that private actors may engage in the illicit trade of these goods. A recent report suggests a low-level trade in smuggled alcohol transported by vessel between islands.

ENVIRONMENT

There is no evidence of a structured market for flora-related crimes in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. However, the country has a small-scale fauna crime market, primarily involving the poaching and illicit trade of endangered native species, particularly the Union Island gecko. This

activity is mainly carried out by independent foreign actors rather than organized criminal networks. While cases of fauna crimes exist, they remain infrequent, and ongoing protective measures have helped mitigate the effects and pervasiveness of this market.

There is no established market for non-renewable resource crimes. While there have been isolated and historic cases of fuel smuggling, primarily linked to supply routes originating from Venezuela, St. Vincent and the Grenadines does not have an established market for non-renewable resource crimes.

DRUGS

There is no indication that St. Vincent and the Grenadines plays a significant role in international heroin trafficking. The country does not appear to be involved in the manufacture or large-scale distribution of heroin, and there are no signs that this issue is a major domestic concern. However, it has a well-established cocaine trade, driven by its fragmented geography, limited enforcement capacity and strategic location as a transit point between South America, the Caribbean, North America and Europe. Shipments, primarily originating from Venezuela, are increasingly routed through the country. Recent interdictions have included cocaine shipments intercepted en route to Martinique and St. Kitts and Nevis. The growth of this trade has fuelled local violence, with authorities linking homicides to drug-related conflicts. The cocaine trade has also intensified money laundering risks, with traffickers using formal and informal financial channels to move illicit profits in and out of the country.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines also has a robust cannabis trade, serving as both a major producer and a trans-shipment point for exports to the Caribbean, North America and Europe. The country ranks as the second-largest cannabis producer in the Caribbean, with cultivation historically tied to medicinal and recreational use. However, high global demand has driven criminal networks to expand cross-border trafficking. The market's persistence is facilitated by legal ambiguities surrounding cannabis possession and cultivation. Like the cocaine trade, the cannabis trade contributes to local violence – as trafficking groups engage in arms smuggling and other illicit markets – and heightens money laundering risks due to its integration with financial services and international financial flows.

Lastly, although the country's geographical location between continents makes it a likely entry point for synthetic drugs, there is no recent evidence indicating the existence of a synthetic drug trafficking market.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyberattacks are not uncommon in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, contributing to the growth of a nascent cyber-dependent criminal market. The government has issued warnings about the risks associated with cryptocurrencies, which are frequently linked to cybercrimes. Despite this emerging threat, the cybercrime market remains in its early stages, with further developments expected as the sector evolves.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes are not uncommon in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, with notable cases involving Ponzi schemes, tax fraud and forex fraud. Recently, there has been an increase in fraud targeting middle-aged individuals through social media platforms. In these cases, perpetrators pose as bank representatives offering a fake opportunity to access abandoned bank funds in exchange for personal banking details.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Gang activity remains an issue. However, very few gangs are mafia-style groups with a hierarchical structure and control of territory. Rising violent crimes are more linked to loosely organized criminal networks rather than traditional mafia-style groups. These loose networks are increasingly targeting youth – particularly schoolboys as young as 13 – offering financial incentives and status to draw them into illicit activities. Often based on family or cultural ties, these networks operate especially in the Grenadine islands and

are primarily involved in drug and human trafficking, with a significant focus on trans-shipment operations for cocaine and cannabis. While these groups collaborate with foreign actors to facilitate the storage and shipment of illicit drugs, they do not have a hierarchical structure, making them difficult to identify. Their growing influence has contributed to increased violence as they compete for dominance in these illegal markets. Transnational links, especially in the drug trade, play a key role in their operations.

Although no direct links between corrupt officials and organized crime have been identified, public perceptions of political corruption persist. Evidence shows Vincentians are concerned about the involvement of political party members in corrupt practices. Corruption – particularly among law enforcement and procurement officials – can facilitate the movement of illegal goods and services, indirectly supporting organized crime.

Foreign criminal organizations, especially Venezuelan drug trafficking groups, significantly influence the country's criminal landscape, leveraging its role as a trans-shipment hub. These foreign networks control the production and smuggling of illicit goods, including cocaine and firearms, and often use local traffickers for discreet operations. This collaboration allows illicit activities to operate under the radar. Additionally, foreign financial crime syndicates, particularly from Europe and South Africa, contribute to transnational criminal activities in the country. Lastly, while detailed information about the private sector's involvement in organized crime is limited, actors within this sector are generally associated with financial crimes and money laundering.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

St. Vincent and the Grenadines has made efforts to combat organized crime, particularly cocaine trafficking, amid rising violence. However, criticism from opposition parties highlights a lack of government action to dismantle criminal groups. The country also faces external concerns over growing crime, including human trafficking. Additionally, challenges including the recent Hurricane Beryl and allegations of voter disenfranchisement may further strain the government's capacity to address crime and governance issues.

Perceptions of corruption remain steady, and while the country maintains a relatively low corruption score, there have still been reports of small-scale corruption cases. Notably, the lack of an anti-corruption body and the

absence of oversight mechanisms limit transparency and accountability efforts. While non-state actors, like media outlets, help monitor corruption, the lack of a formal oversight structure reflects insufficient political will. Although the government publishes budgets and public contracts, the implementation of freedom of information laws remains incomplete, undermining transparency efforts.

St. and the Grenadines has ratified numerous international conventions to combat organized crime, including those focused on transnational crime, narcotics, arms trafficking and human trafficking. The country maintains extradition agreements with several nations and engages in regional initiatives such as the Caribbean Community's Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, which includes training law enforcement and intelligence sharing. It also supports

the CariSECURE Project, enhancing data collection and interpretation. Operationally, the country cooperates closely with international partners, particularly on drug trafficking efforts.

Domestically, the country's legal system is based on UK law and has provisions for criminal activities, including drug, human and arms trafficking, counterfeit goods and financial crimes. Possession of small quantities of cannabis has been decriminalized, and there are ongoing reforms to firearm laws, which may increase prison sentences for related violations. In 2023, amendments to human trafficking legislation replaced fines with harsher prison sentences. Still, the country lacks specialized smuggling laws, and smuggling cases are under-reported. And while St. Vincent and the Grenadines is committed to combating cybercrime through initiatives like the Global Action on Cybercrime Extended initiative, domestic penalties remain insufficient – often limited to fines rather than prison sentences – falling short of international standards.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The judiciary operates independently under the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, and its courts are capable of handling organized crime cases. However, resource limitations contribute to a significant backlog, and enforcement of existing laws is often inadequate, resulting in few high-profile prosecutions. Despite these challenges, the country has seen improvements in judicial effectiveness. The penitentiary system consists of two prisons, neither of which is reported to be controlled by gangs, but conditions remain below international standards. The prisons are operating at about 80% capacity, with a high number of pre-trial detainees, and budget shortages further hinder their ability to function effectively.

The country has several specialized law enforcement units that target organized crime, including maritime patrols, customs enforcement and the National Crime Prevention Commission, which handles gang-related crimes, money laundering and witness protection. There is also an Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit. However, gaps in funding, enforcement and legislation persist, compounded by limited resources and police abuse. The country's geographical challenges further complicate crime prevention. While no comprehensive counter-organized crime policy exists, there are ongoing improvements and strong cooperation with international intelligence partners. Recent police actions, including arrests related to homicides, reflect efforts to address rising crime, though significant issues remain.

Monitoring the country's porous borders remains a challenge, particularly due to its distribution across 32 islands, which allows organized crime groups to enter undetected. Positioned along key trafficking routes between Latin America, North America and Europe, St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a trans-shipment point for

drugs and arms, with neighbouring islands like Trinidad and Tobago also playing a role. Despite recent improvements in border control, limited resources continue to hinder effective enforcement. In July 2024, Hurricane Beryl devastated several of the country's islands, exacerbating law enforcement and recovery efforts.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

St. Vincent and the Grenadines has implemented comprehensive measures to combat anti-money laundering (AML) and counterterrorism financing, including laws such as the Financial Services Authority Act (2011) and the Proceeds of Crime Act (2013). The country's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), which has a transparent presence online, monitors financial crimes and is supported by the Financial Services Authority. While the country is not blacklisted for money laundering, it faces moderate AML risks. Financial investigations occur regularly, and while there is no conclusive evidence of widespread money laundering activities, the risk remains moderate.

The country has a flexible economic system, but entrepreneurial activities are hindered by limited access to funding. While foreign and domestic investors are treated equally, foreign investment is heavily monitored, especially in key sectors like tourism. In 2024, the country's economic freedom ranking declined due to factors such as reduced government spending and fiscal health, as well as trade barriers. It is part of a currency union, with the East Caribbean dollar pegged to the US dollar. Although organized crime is not pervasive in specific sectors, there have been reports of human trafficking, particularly labour exploitation involving immigrants, in some businesses.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

St. Vincent and the Grenadines faces criticism for its lack of formal victim and protection programmes for human trafficking, with limited government involvement in assisting victims. Civil society organizations are primarily responsible for providing support, but there has been no formal identification of trafficking victims since 2019. Although a witness protection programme exists, there is no evidence that it is effective, and provisions for anonymity have not been utilized. Likewise, findings suggest that the country does not have a system in place to prevent children's involvement in illicit activities, such as drug production. The country also lacks initiatives aimed at preventing drug consumption and trade, with law enforcement primarily focused on combating organized crime networks.

Authorities have recently increased their efforts to prevent organized crime through awareness campaigns – particularly targeting youth – that focus on drug, arms and human trafficking. St. Vincent and the Grenadines has also focused on educating the public about cybercrime and

technological advancements in criminal activities. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives remains unclear due to a lack of data and broader socio-economic challenges that drive individuals to crime. While the country has made progress in human trafficking prevention through legal frameworks and labour inspections, insufficient victim services and a lack of prosecutions since 2015 indicate gaps in meeting international standards.

Civil society in St. Vincent and the Grenadines plays an active role in crime prevention and education, particularly regarding cannabis production and its regulation. Media outlets operate freely under constitutional provisions for press freedom and report on organized crime's effect on security and public welfare. However, the extension of the Cybercrime Act, along with existing defamation laws, have raised concerns about press freedom, as journalists face potential fines and imprisonment for defamation. These legal measures restrict full freedom of expression and opinion, despite the country's otherwise respected media environment, which includes access to online and foreign media.

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.